TAWḤĪD OF ALLĀH'S

Most Beautiful Names & Lofty Attributes

THE BELIEF OF AHL AL-SUNNAH WA L-JAMĀ'AH

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بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَـٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Bisimi Allahi Alrrahmani Alrraheemi

In the name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful

مُعتقدُ أهلِ السُّنَّةِ والجماعةِ

في توحيدِ الأسماءِ والصِّفاتِ

Tawḥīd of Allah's

Most Beautiful Names & Lofty Attributes

The of Belief Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamāʿah

by

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Translated by

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معتقد أهل السنة والجماعة

في توحيد الأسماء والصفات

Tawḥīd of Allah's
Most Beautiful Names
& Lofty Attributes
The Belief Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah

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Transliteration Table

Consonants,

ʿ	ʾ	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	z	ع	ʿ	ن	n
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

Vowels, diphthongs, etc.

Short:	ـَ	a	ـِ	i	ـُ	u
Long:	ـَا	ā	ـُو	ū	ـِي	ī
diphthongs:			ـَوْ	aw		
			ـَيْ	ay		

Translator's Note

All praise is for Allāh alone and may He exalt and send peace and blessings upon our beloved Prophet and upon those who follow his way.

The author of this work is Shaykh Muḥammad Ibn Khalīfah Ibn 'Alī al-Tamīmī. He was born in al-Madīnah in the year 1374H (1959). He graduated from the Islamic University there and subsequently obtained his Masters (1406H) and Doctorate (1410H) at the University, specialising in *'aqīdah*. At present he is an associate professor at the University in the faculty of Da'wah and Uṣūl al-Dīn and he is also the head of the Academic Research section at the University. The Shaykh has a number of works that have been published ranging from verifications of classical works, articles for various magazines as well as a number of works he himself has authored.

This particular book of his is by far one of the best in its field as an introduction into the subject area of the *tawḥīd* of Allāh's Names and Attributes, and Allāh knows best. Some of its features are:

- The explanation of the fundamentals and principles of *Ahl al-Sunnah* in this area along with a clarification of some specific detailed matters.
- Clarification of the deviant methodologies in a clear manner whilst explaining the truth in this regard.
- The stages of the book have been set out in a well structured manner as the author begins with the importance of the subject. He then moves on to definitions, then relationships, explanations and rulings and then a further deeper clarification.
- The clarity of his expression and discussion of this subject.
- An emphasis on the practical issues that pertain to this subject as mentioned in a number of points under the topic of the importance of this category of *tawḥīd*.

This last point in reality is the end objective of this subject area; the manner in which Allāh's Names and Attributes are to be understood and how they are to have an impact in the *īmān* and behaviour of a person. However, this book does not cover this aspect in a detailed manner. The scope of this book precedes this and is much more technical, concerning itself with the means towards this objective. It is related to the issue of the correct belief towards Allāh's Names and Attributes. For one to be truly affected by Allāh's Names and Attributes , the goal, as necessitated by the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of His Messenger (ﷺ) he has to possess the correct belief - the means - in these Names and Attributes.

Please note that certain areas of this book relate more to a textbook than to a book for casual reading. As such, one needs to read over certain sections more than once and it may, in fact, be of greater benefit to read the entire book more than once.

- The Arabic original *Mu'taqad Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah fī Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt* is published by Aḍwā' Al-Salaf, Riyadh, K.S.A. (New Print), 1999.
- Any footnote terminated with a [t] is from the translator.
- Translation of the Qur'ān is based on *The Noble Qur'an* by Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan with slight modification when necessary.
- May Allāh reward all those who have helped in this translation and with Him lies all success. May He make our actions sincerely for His Face and not let anyone have a share in them.

Preface

All praise is for Allāh. We praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness. We turn to Him in repentance and seek refuge in Allāh from the evil of our selves and the wickedness of our own deeds. Whomsoever Allāh guides, cannot be led astray and whomsoever Allāh misguides, none can guide him. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh, alone without any partner. To Him belong the most beautiful Names and the most exalted Attributes.

I bear witness that Muḥammad is His Slave, Messenger and His trusted one with the revelation. Allāh sent him with the guidance and religion of truth. He conveyed the message, rendered the trust placed upon him, sincerely advised the *ummah*, made *jihād* in the cause of Allāh in its truest sense and worshipped His Lord until he met the inevitable certainty[1]. May Allāh praise him and send peace upon him and his household.

This study is the first of the series, *Studies on the subject areas of Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt,* and its title is, *The belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah in Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt.*

Allāh willing, the following studies will succeed it:

The second study:	The *belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah in the most beautiful Names of Allāh*
The third study:	The *belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah in the most exalted Attributes of Allāh*
The fourth study:	The *principles of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah in understanding the texts which contain the Names and Attributes of Allāh*

[1] i.e. death. [t]

The fifth study: The *statements of al-Ta'ṭīl*[2] *and the position of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah towards them*

The sixth study: The *statements of al-Tashbīh and the position of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah towards them*

My intention behind the publication of this series is to serve the following areas:

1. To explain the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah* in the Names and Attributes of Allāh in both a comprehensive and detailed manner. This is achieved by firstly clarifying the general and fundamental issues, then researching into the specific detailed issues found within these fundamentals. I have devoted this first study to presenting the major principles that manifest and clarify the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah* from a general viewpoint. Each and every specific issue is then dealt with in its totality in further separate studies.

2. To bring together the dispersed issues related to this field. These issues are scattered in the books of *Ahl al-Sunnah*. I have exerted my utmost in trying to compile, arrange and classify these issues, as well as trying to structure them in a way which will make it easy to understand and investigate.

3. To disclose the corruption of the doctrines of the people of deviation and error who deviated from the truth in this domain. This is done to show the reasoning behind the falsity of their beliefs and the scope of their deviation and perversion in order for the Muslim to be on his guard against falling into such deviation.

[2] This word and other such terms, which are specific to this field, will be explained further on in the book. [t]

This first study embodies the following chapters:

1. The Definition of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt* and its Relationship to the Other Categories of *Tawḥīd*

Two areas of discussion are contained in this chapter:

1. The definition of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt*
2. Its relationship to the other categories of *Tawḥīd*

2. The Belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamāʿah* in the Names and Attributes of Allāh

Three areas of discussion are contained in this chapter:

1. The definition of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* and *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah*
2. The belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamāʿah* in the Names and Attributes of Allāh
3. The foundations on which their belief in the Names and Attributes of Allāh is based

I have ended this first study with a conclusion and added a number of appendices.

I do not claim to have reached a level of perfection in this study, but it suffices me that I have exerted my utmost efforts. If I am correct then that is by the Favour of Allāh alone, and if I have fallen short of the mark, or erred, then this is from the nature of man's efforts. So I ask of those who come across anything incorrect in this study to immediately inform me of such.

I ask Allāh to accept this effort of mine and that He make it a righteous act enacted purely for His Face and that He does not allow anyone else to have a share in it.

The end to our supplication is that All praise is for Allāh, Lord of the worlds.

Muḥammad Ibn Khalīfah al-Tamīmī

The Importance of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt*

All praise is for Allāh, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy the Owner of the Day of Judgement. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh, alone without any partner, the One who is characterised by qualities of Magnificence and Who is described with Attributes of perfection.

I bear witness that Muḥammad is His slave and Messenger, His trusted one with His revelation, His favoured one from among His creation and His proof over His servants, may Allāh praise and send peace upon him and his family.

It is of great benefit and importance to the seeker of truth before he embarks on studying the intricacies of the areas of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt* to be aware of the importance of this category of *Tawḥīd*, its value, status and role in relation to belief principally, and to the rest of the religion as a whole.

In bringing this beneficial concept to the attention of the Muslim, i.e. regarding the high position this *Tawḥīd* possesses, it will be of benefit to him, by the will of Allāh, in his *īmān* in Allāh as he will assign to this area the importance it warrants. Similarly it will increase his desire to learn and understand its various aspects, issues and branches, of which the student of knowledge, who desires to equip himself with more beneficial knowledge, cannot do without.

It is regrettable to find that some individuals attach little importance and significance to this category of *Tawḥīd*. Such a person believes that the issues relating to this domain do not go beyond the mere listing of the different and averse opinions concerning the *number* of Names and Attributes negated or affirmed for Allāh. This whole area in his view does not exceed this and is limited to it.

This notion and statement can only emanate from one of two individuals: either an ignorant person who is unaware of the beneficial issues contained in this field and of the level of importance and understanding that no Muslim can dispense with or one who has deviations in his belief; for he presumes that the condition of this field is defined by the state it exists in amongst the people of falsehood, who did not seek enlightenment from the Book or the Sunnah in this field nor any other.

Accordingly, their discussion in this domain did not go beyond contesting the Names and Attributes of Allāh and raising doubts in all or most of them. Hence, they sealed the doorway to attaining any knowledge of these Names and Attributes, let alone, clarifying its status and role to the Muslim's belief and *īmān* in his Lord.

Therefore, out of desiring to shed light towards the truth, to teach the ignorant who is heedless, call and appeal to the violator who has deviated and as a means of revision for the scholar, I have written these words which point to some of the benefits and virtues that this particular category of *Tawḥīd* embodies. I hope Allāh causes the one who peruses and recollects it to benefit from it.

For that reason I summarise, and with Allāh lies all success and to Him I reach out for help and direction, what I would like to explain, is discussed in the following points:

1. This Tawḥīd Represents Half of Īmān in Allāh

The Muslim is not oblivious of the importance of *īmān* in Allāh, as it is the first article of *īmān*, in fact, it is the greatest of them all, for the others merely follow on from it and are its offspring.

This particular article is the single most important matter for which creation was created, Messengers were sent, books were revealed and upon which the correct path was built.

Īmān in Allāh is the foundation of every good, source of all guidance and reason for every success. Since man is a creation and is subject to

Allāh's Lordship, he reverts back to his Creator and Maker in his knowledge and action. So, by Him he is guided, for Him he acts and to Him he will return. Man cannot do without Him and to avert to other than Him is the cornerstone of his destruction and ruin.

Man has Allāh as a substitute for everything whereas nothing or no one can dispense of Allāh[3]. So the slave cannot attain any goodness or success except through knowing his Lord and worshipping Him. If this occurs, then this is the intended objective for him and the reason for his existence. Anything else besides this is of extra benefit or superfluous having no benefit or is a harmful remnant.

This is why the call of the Messengers to their people was that of a call to having *īmān* in Allāh and worshipping Him. Every Messenger started his call with this as anyone who researches into the call *(da'wah)* of the Messengers mentioned in the Qur'ān will discover.

The essential prerequisite for happiness, safety and success is obtained by actualising the two categories of *Tawḥīd,* that *īmān* in Allāh is built upon. For the purpose of fulfilling this, Allāh sent His Messenger (ﷺ) and to it, the earlier Messengers called, the very first of them to the very last.

One of the two categories is ***Tawḥīd al-'Ilmī al-Khabarī al-'Itiqādī***[4] which comprises affirming Attributes of perfection for Allāh and declaring Him to be free of any similarity or likeness and elevating Him above descriptions of imperfection.

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[3] i.e. one who relies on Allāh and entrusts his affairs to Him, truthfully and upon knowledge and insight, is content and manages without anyone or anything besides Him in both prosperous and troublesome times. At the same time, nothing or no one can dispense of Allāḥ in trying to achieve their welfare and repel any harm, regardless of the physical and mental strengths he has. These two meanings are from the meanings of Allāh's name, '*al-Qayyūm*' as the *qayyūm* is the one who is self-sufficient and self-supportive **and** who supports and suffices all else, and that is Allāh alone. [t]

[4] *Al-'Ilmī* i.e. concentrating on knowledge as opposed to action (*al-'Amalī*). *Al-Khabarī* i.e. this knowledge is dependent upon revealed text (*ḳhabr*). *Al-'Itiqādī* i.e. it takes form as part of the persons belief. [t]

The second category of *Tawḥīd*[5] is to worship Him alone, without any partner; to have absolute love, sincerity, fear, hope and reliance in Him; to be pleased with Him as Lord, Deity, and Patron and not to set up any partners alongside Him in anything.

Allāh has incorporated these two categories in the two *Sūrahs* of purity:

They are the *Sūrah* قل يا أيها الكافرون[6] which contains *al-Tawḥīd al-'Amalī al-Irādī* and the *Sūrah* قل هو الله أحد[7] which contains *al-Tawḥīd al-'Ilmī al-Khabarī*.

So, the *Sūrah* قل هو الله أحد entails an explanation of what Allāh possesses of Attributes of perfection and an explanation of His elevation over and above any imperfections and similitude, whilst the *Sūrah* قل يا أيها الكافرون entails the obligation of worshipping Him alone, without any partner, and the renouncement of worshipping anything besides Him.

Neither of the two categories is complete without the other. For this reason, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to recite these two Sūrahs in the *sunnah* prayers of *Fajr*, *Maghrib* and *Witr*[8], which commence work-time and conclude work-time, so that the beginning of the day starts with *Tawḥīd* and the end of the day closes with *Tawḥīd*.[9]

In summary, with regard to the *Tawḥīd* that is demanded from the servant, **half** of it is represented in *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt*.

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[5] *Al-Tawḥīd al-'Amalī al-Irādī*. *al-'Amalī* i.e. concentrating on action and *al-Irādī* i.e. that the heart and limbs worship, strive, intend and desire only Allāh in their actions. [t]

[6] The first *āyah* from Sūrah al-Kāfirūn (109).

[7] The first *āyah* from Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ (112).

[8] Shaykh al-Albānī, may Allāh have mercy upon him, mentions this fact for all three prayers and provides the *takhrīj* for it. Refer to *The Prophet's Prayer Described from the beginning to the end as though you see it*, pp. 31, 34 &38. [t]

[9] *Ijtimā' al-Juyūsh al-Islāmiyyah 'alā Ghazwi al-Mu'attilah al-Jahmiyyah*, pp. 35-36.

2. *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt is Without Exception the Most Noble and Most Important Branch of Knowledge*

Indeed, the excellence of a particular branch of knowledge is dependent upon the excellence of that particular known thing itself, because of the assurance one has in the evidences and proofs for its existence, the intense need one has for knowing it and the tremendous benefit it returns.

Without doubt, the most Exalted, most Magnificent and Greatest known entity is Allāh, Whom, none has the right to be worshipped but He, Lord of the Worlds, the Self-Sufficient and Sustainer of the Heavens and Earths; The King; the Reality; al-Mubīn[10]; the One described with all perfection; elevated above every defect, deficiency and like, and above any similitude to His perfection.

There is no doubt therefore, that knowledge of Allāh, His Names, Attributes and Actions is the most exalted and most excellent branch of knowledge. The comparison of this branch of knowledge to all the other branches is like the comparison of Allāh to all other entities.[11]

If it is questioned: "Knowledge is merely the means to action and knowledge is acquired for it: action is the objective. Moreover, it is of common fact that the objective possesses a greater excellence than the means. So how is it that you prefer the means over its goal?"

It is replied: "Both knowledge and action have two parts: a part that is the means and a part that is the objective.

So knowledge is not always the means and is not always indirectly sought after.

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[10] One of Allāh's most beautiful Names, the Evident, Whose presence and reality is an unquestionable certainty because of the multitude of proofs and signs He has shown and placed within His creation. Indeed, the evidences pointing to His *tawḥīd*, His Lordship and Sovereignty are more evident than the midday Sun. He is also the One who has clearly shown to His creation the path to salvation and success. [t]

[11] *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'ādah*, 1/86.

Knowledge of Allāh, His Names and Attributes is without exception the most excellent of all types of knowledge and it is sought after in itself, Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ
سَبْعَ سَمَٰوَٰتٍ وَمِنَ ٱلْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ يَتَنَزَّلُ ٱلْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوٓا۟ أَنَّ
ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عِلْمًۢا ﴿١٢﴾

"It is Allāh Who has created seven Heavens and of the earth the like thereof (i.e. seven). His commands descend between them, so that you may know that Allāh has power over all things and that Allāh completely comprehends all things with His knowledge."[12]

Allāh (*subḥānahu*) informs that He created the Heavens and earth and brings down commands between them so that His slaves may know that He is well aware of everything and that He is over all things Omnipotent. So having knowledge of this is the desired objective.

Allāh (*ta'āla*) also says:

فَٱعْلَمْ أَنَّهُۥ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ

"So know that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh..."[13]

The knowledge therefore, of His Oneness and that none has the right to be worshipped except He, is sought for in itself, even though, the person cannot suffice with this by itself. Rather, he must add to this, worship of Allāh alone, without any partner. So they are two distinct matters which are sought after in themselves.

The first matter: to know the Lord by His Names, Attributes, Actions and Laws.

The second matter: to worship Him in accordance and on the basis of this knowledge.

So just as worship of Him is demanded and directly intended in itself, then likewise, knowledge of Him is also demanded and directly intended in itself.

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[12] Sūrah al-Ṭalāq (65):12.

[13] Sūrah Muḥammad (47):19.

In fact, (acquiring) knowledge is from amongst the best acts of worship.[14]

3. Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt is the Origin of all Religious Knowledge[15]

Just as knowledge of the Names, Attributes and Actions of Allāh is the most exalted, noblest and greatest of knowledge, it is also the *origin* of all knowledge. All other branches of knowledge are its subsidiaries and are dependent upon it for their very own verification. Knowledge of Him is therefore, the origin and basis of every other type of knowledge. So, whoever knows Allāh will be able to know other than Allāh and whoever is ignorant of His Lord, then he in fact possesses greater ignorance of everything else besides Allāh. Allāh says:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنسَاهُمْ أَنفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

> **"And be not like those who forgot Allāh and He caused them to forget their own selves. They are the transgressors."**[16]

Contemplate this *āyah*; you will find within it a mighty and illustrious meaning: "Whosoever forgets His Lord, He will cause him to forget his very own self and soul". He will not know his own reality or what constitutes his welfare. In fact, he will forget what constitutes his own prosperity and success in this life and the next. This because he has departed from the original disposition he was created upon. He forgot His Lord, so Allāh caused him to forget his own self, its qualities and what leads to its fulfilment, purification and happiness in this life and the next. Allāh says:

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[14] *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'ādah* 1/178.

[15] In turn, religious knowledge forms the basis of all other types of knowledge besides it. Hence, absolutely all types of knowledge return back to Allāh's Names and Attributes, as shown in the discussion. [t]

[16] Sūrah al-Ḥashr (59):19.

وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُۥ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَٱتَّبَعَ هَوَىٰهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُۥ فُرُطًا ﴿٢٨﴾

"...and do not obey the one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who follows his own desires and whose affair (i.e. deeds) has been lost."[17]

He did not give any attention to remembering His Lord and so his affair and heart went into disarray. As a result, no regard is now paid to the welfare, growth or purification of his self and heart. Instead, he has sundered his heart and caused its downfall. He exceeded all bounds, is confused and is unable to find the right way.

Thus, knowledge of Allāh is the origin of all knowledge and it is the basis of the servant's knowledge towards his happiness, perfection and betterment in this life and the next. Ignorance of Allāh necessitates ignorance of one's self and of what constitutes its betterment, perfection, purification and success.

So, knowledge of Him proposes happiness for the servant and ignorance of Him lies at the heart of his misery.[18]

4. Knowledge of Allāh's Names and Attributes is a Great and Important Tenet within the Methodology of the Salaf

Knowledge of Allāh's Names and Attributes is the foundation upon which the servant's actions are built. On the strength of this foundation the relationship that binds the servant to his Lord is determined and in view of this foundation the Muslim worships his Lord and seeks to attain nearness to Him.

For this reason, the basis for the knowledge and action of the *Salaf* was:

1. Knowledge **of Allāh**

2. Action directed solely **to Allāh**

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[17] Sūrah al-Kahf (18):28.

[18] *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'ādah* 1/86.

With this, they combined both belief based on knowledge and action based on love.

Furthermore, their belief, actions and love were based upon knowledge, so they were free of the harmful elements found amongst the deviant *Mutakallimah* (scholastics) and Sūfis.

With respect to the scholastics, the majority of their study and statements centre on issues of affirmation, negation, existence, non-existence and on issues pertaining to belief. Their area of discussion therefore, concentrated on belief, knowledge and information.

Whereas the Sūfis, their main concern centred on love, hate, intentions, dislikes and physical actions. Their area of discussion therefore, concentrated on love, submission, action and intentions.

Both of these two deviant groups have within them two corrupted elements:

The first:

The presence of speech that is not based on knowledge with respect to the scholastic and the presence of action that is not based on knowledge with respect to the Sūfi.

This is a direct reference to the innovated speech and action that occurred from them, which lie in contradiction to the Book and Sunnah.

The second:

The neglect of deeds by the scholastic and the neglect of speech by the Sūfi.[19]

[19] This is the ruling, in general. One observes that theoretical and speculative discussions dominate the concern of *Ahl al-Kalām*, of old and new, but actions amongst them are few, especially acts of worship such as prayer, remembrance, recitation, etc. That which is observed from the *Sūfiyyah* on the other hand, is concentration on the actions of the heart and limbs, but with negligence of determining precisely the knowledge-based issues and the validity of their actions. This is a ruling based on what is found to be dominant amongst them. [t]

As for the *Salaf* and their followers, they fulfilled both matters:

The speech concerning creed that is based upon the knowledge of Allāh's Names, Attributes and Actions that are recorded in the Book and Sunnah and the intention-based actions that emanate from abiding to commands and refraining from prohibitions in accordance with Allāh's legislations in His Book and upon the tongue of His Messenger (ﷺ).

Accordingly, their external and internal speech and actions were based upon knowledge and each of their knowledge and action were linked to the other; they indeed are the true Muslims.[20]

So, the *Salaf* and their followers made *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt* one of the two pillars on which they built their methodology.

This is directly due to the importance and status this category of *Tawḥīd* holds, which is attested to by numerous texts of the *Sharī'ah*.

5. Knowledge of the Names and Attributes of Allāh Opens the Door for the Servant to Knowing Allāh

The question of possessing love for something is primarily dependent upon firstly being acquainted with that thing. The most knowledgeable of Allāh amongst creation will therefore have the strongest love for Him. Everyone who knows Allāh, loves Him, but there is no route to acquiring this knowledge except through the doorway of knowledge of Allāh's Names and Attributes.

The servant therefore, will only be able to attain knowledge of Allāh by acquainting himself with the Names and Attributes of Allāh recorded in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Consequently, knowledge of Allāh's Names and Attributes will open this mighty door for the servant, as Allāh (*'azza wa jalla*) did not designate the way to knowing Him through seeing Him directly. This doorway is blocked until the Day of Judgement just as we have been informed by our Prophet

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[20] *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 1/41, slightly abridged.

Muḥammad (ﷺ) when he said: *"Know that none of you will see his Lord until he dies"*.[21]

Furthermore, it is impossible for the human intellect to independently attain and comprehend this knowledge in a detailed manner[22]. It is incapable of achieving this because Allāh is from the Unseen about which there is no way of acquiring any knowledge except by way of revelation. Allāh (*ʿazza wa jalla*) says:

وَمَآ أُوتِيتُم مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٥﴾

"...you have not been given of knowledge except a little."[23]

This *āyah* clearly shows the limitations of man's knowledge.

The mercy of the Mighty and Wise necessitated that He send Messengers who would inform the people about Himself and call them to Him. He made the knowledge of Himself by way of His Names, Attributes and Actions the key to their *daʿwah* and the essence of their message.

The basis of the *daʿwah* of the Messengers and the first tenet contained within it is knowledge of Allāh (*subḥānahu*) by His Names, Attributes and Actions. Two great tenets then follow on from this:

1. To acquaint the people with the way that leads to Allāh (i.e. His *Sharīʿah* which embodies His commands and prohibitions)

2. To inform the people of what awaits them in the Hereafter.

These two tenets follow on from the first and are based upon it.

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[21] Related by Muslim in his *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, the book of *Fitan*, Chapter: The mention of Ibn Ṣayyād, 8/193.

[22] As opposed to a very general manner. By looking around and contemplating over the universe, one can conclude certain Attributes of the Creator, such as Knowledge, Ability, Mercy, etc. However, without revelation, how can one know for instance, that our Lord descends to the lowest heaven at the last third of the night asking about who is beseeching Him, seeking His forgiveness and asking of Him, so that He may grant them what they seek? [t]

[23] Sūrah al-Isrāʾ (17):85.

So, the most knowledgeable of Allāh will be the one who follows best the way which leads to Him and he will also be the most knowledgeable concerning the conditions of the people when they return to Him.

6. The Basis of Sound Knowledge is Īmān in Allāh and in His Names and Attributes

Correct *īmān*, pure *Tawḥīd* and all the dictates contained within the message (of Islām) stand upon the foundation of sound and correct knowledge of Allāh, His Names and Attributes.

This category of *Tawḥīd* is the basis of guidance and *īmān* and it is the foundation upon which the religion stands.

This is why it is not conceivable for correct *īmān* to be held by one who does not know his Lord. This knowledge is a must for the basis of *īmān* to settle in the heart.

It is of extreme importance to the believer because of his dire need for it, for the benefit of the well being of his heart, the goodness of his belief and the uprightness of his actions.

This knowledge of Allāh's Names, Attributes and Actions grants the servant the ability to differentiate between *īmān* and *kufr*, *tawḥīd* and *shirk*, and between affirmation and negation.

It enables him to elevate his Lord over and above everything that does not befit Him and to depict Him in the Glorious and Majestic manner well deserving of Him.

This is achieved by contemplating over the words of Allāh (*ta'āla*), and over what He (*subḥānahu*) has made known of His Names, Attributes and Actions to His servants upon the tongues of His Messengers, and also by contemplating over those attributes which do not befit Him, which He (*subḥānahu*) has declared Himself free of and elevated Himself over.

It is appropriate here to mention that knowledge of Allāh is of two levels:

The first level: General knowledge

This knowledge is a necessary requirement for the believing servant to possess the basic *īmān*. The degree to which this knowledge manifests is related to the level at which the servant is able to distinguish his Lord from all false objects of worship. By this knowledge, *īmān* in its elementary stage exists, the servant escapes from the dangers of *kufr* and *shirk* that would otherwise expel him from the boundaries of *īmān*[24], and he comes away from the realm of remaining ignorant of his Lord and as to what His rights are.

This knowledge can be readily obtained by reading *Sūrah* al-*Ikhlāṣ*, *āyah al-Kursī* and other *āyāt*, and by understanding their meanings.

This level of knowledge however, does not generate strength of *īmān* nor does it firmly establish it.

The second level: Detailed knowledge

This comes to light by knowing the detailed evidences found within this subject area, learning them, believing that Allāh is depicted with such, understanding their meanings and acting in light of their instructions and rulings.

This is the level of knowledge that causes *īmān* to increase and to ground itself solidly.

The more the servant knows of Allāh, the more his *īmān* increases, and the greater will be his fear, love and attachment to his Lord.

Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى ٱللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ٱلْعُلَمَٰٓؤُا۟

"It is only those of His slaves who have knowledge that fear Allāh".[25]

This knowledge also imparts to the servant light and insight, which will protect him from areas of doubt and misconceptions that can (oth-

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[24] The type of *kufr* and *shirk* referred to here is of the major type. [t]

[25] Sūrah Fāṭir (35):28.

erwise) cause him to stray and which protect him from unlawful desires and lusts.

[In reality, two types of knowledge are meant by the phrase 'Knowledge of Allāh'.

The first: knowledge of Allāh Himself, i.e. of the Majestic and Honourable qualities He is characterised with and of what His most beautiful Names indicate.

If this knowledge is well established in ones heart it will most certainly produce fear of Allāh, because he will know for definite that Allāh rewards any obedience to Him and punishes any disobedience of Him.

The second: 'Knowledge of Allāh' means knowledge of the rulings of the *Sharī'ah*, such as the commands and prohibitions and the lawful and unlawful.

This is why some of the *Salaf* have mentioned: "The scholars are three:

1. One who knows Allāh and is ignorant of His Command.

2. One who knows Allāh's Command but is ignorant of Allāh.

3. One who knows both Allāh and His Command.

The one who knows Allāh is the one who fears Allāh, and the one who knows His Command is the one who knows the lawful and unlawful".[26]

7. Knowledge of Allāh's Names and Attributes is Life to the Hearts

The heart is void of any life, comfort, happiness, security and tranquillity without knowing its Lord, Deity and Creator, and without Allāh being more beloved to it than anything else.

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[26] *Majmū' al-Fatāwa* 3/333, slightly abridged.

One who does not have *īmān* in Allāh cannot obtain knowledge[27] and guidance, and without being guided to his Lord, he will always be miserable and tormented, as is the case with the unbelievers[28].

Allāh (*tabāraka*) created man and assembled him with both body and soul.

He desired that the body be created from the earth. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَٰكُم مِّن تُرَابٍ

"...for We have created you all from earth"[29]

Allāh made the body's life and livelihood dependent upon this same earth; he eats, drinks and takes his clothing from the land and what is found within it.

Allāh placed within this body, the soul. He (*ta'āla*) said:

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُۥ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي

"So, when I have fashioned him (i.e. Ādam) and breathed into him the soul I have created for him..."[30]

Allāh willed that the sustenance and livelihood for this soul be knowledge of Himself and worship of Him.

There is therefore nothing more pleasant to the servant, nor anything sweeter, more wholesome and blissful to his heart and life, than love

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[27] i.e. knowledge, which is based upon correct principles pertaining to *īmān*, whereby they ensure praiseworthy fruits in this world and the Hereafter. It is obvious that if the disbeliever exerts efforts, he will obtain some knowledge, but much of it is false and little of it is true, being limited in benefit and great in harm...[t]

[28] The reality of the state of the disbelievers caused by their alienation to the religion of Allāh is something very evident. Just a quick glance at the effects of the spiritual vacuum they experience, may Allāh protect us from that, reveals for us a little of this reality; the great numbers of suicides, incurable mental illnesses, submersion into materialism, the inexhaustible amount of laughable and lamentable fashions, the regulation and legislation for sexual deviation, etc. [t]

[29] Sūrah al-Ḥajj (22):5.

[30] Sūrah al-Ḥijr (15):29.

for his Originator and Maker, being in a state of constant remembrance of Him and always seeking to earn His pleasure.

Consequently, whoever possesses in his heart even a minimum amount of life or love for his Lord, a desire for Him, and a yearning to meet Him, then his pursuit for this subject area, his strong desire to know and increase his understanding of it and his query and investigation of it, will be his greatest goal and most glorious objective.

For this is **the** perfection, without which the servant cannot otherwise attain perfection. It is the reason behind his creation and because of it revelation descended, Messengers were sent, the Heavens and earth stand and Paradise and Hell-Fire exist. For this very reason laws were legislated, the correct path was established, the Qiblah was determined and it is the pivot of creation and order, upon which they centre.

It is by all rights, the finest thing which the hearts can possess, which the souls can attain and which the minds can grasp. Sound and healthy hearts and secure and tranquil souls do not yearn earnestly for anything greater than to know this matter, nor are they more joyful with anything other than succeeding in arriving at the truths contained within this matter.[31]

8. The Fruits of Knowing and Understanding Allāh's Names and Attributes

Another aspect which indicates and emphasises the importance of this category of *Tawḥīd* is the benefits derived in the believer's heart from knowing the Names and Attributes of Allāh. These include an increase in *īmān*, firmness in certainty and the light and insight it instils (in one's heart), which protect him from areas of doubt and misconceptions that can (otherwise) cause him to stray and which protect him from unlawful desires and lusts.

Thus, if this knowledge is firmly established in the heart it will most definitely produce fear of Allāh.

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[31] See *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyyah al-Kubrā*, pp. 28-29.

Each and every Name of Allāh has a particular impact on the heart and character of the servant. If the heart comprehends the meaning of a specific Name, what it embodies, and is conscious of it, it will reply to these meanings and this awareness and understanding will reflect in the person's thinking and mode of behaviour.

Likewise, every Attribute has a specific form of worship attached to it, which is the result of the requisites dictated by this particular Attribute.

The most beautiful Names of Allāh and His most exalted Attributes therefore yield worship as their effects.

This covers all forms of worship that appear on the heart and limbs. For example, the knowledge of the servant that Allāh (*ta'āla*) alone is able to Harm and Benefit, Give and Withhold, to Create, Sustain, to give Life and cause Death, will produce the worship of *Tawakkul* it its inner form (i.e. in the heart) and the requisites and fruits of *Tawakkul* in its apparent form (i.e. upon the limbs).

The servant's knowledge of Allāh's (*ta'āla*) Hearing, Sight and Knowledge, and of the fact that not a single atom in the heavens and earth escape Him, and that He knows the secret and hidden, what the treacherous eyes behold and what the breasts conceal, will make him preserve his tongue, limbs and the notions of his heart from anything that displeases Allāh. He will make these limbs devoted to what Allāh loves and is pleased with. So it yields modesty within him as well as manifesting it outwardly by making him steer clear of the prohibited and repulsive matters.

Knowledge of His Richness, Generosity, Kindness, Beneficence and Mercy will grant the servant a wealth of optimism, and it will give birth to many types of hidden and apparent servitude, all in proportion to his understanding and knowledge.

Likewise, the knowledge of the Majesty of Allāh, His Greatness and Might generates for the servant humility, submission and love. These inner conditions in turn produce several apparent forms of servitude.

Similarly, knowledge of His Perfection, Beauty and exalted Attributes will grant him a specific love that becomes represented by many forms of servitude.

So all forms of servitude to Him are related back to the dictates of the Names and Attributes and are linked to it.[32]

In light of the above, it is has become apparent that the servant's knowledge of the Names and Attributes of Allāh in the correct manner, which Allāh (*'azza wa jalla*) has informed about in His Book and in the Sunnah of His Messenger, will certainly make the servant establish servitude to Allāh in the most perfect manner.

Hence, the more complete the servant's *īmān* in the Attributes is, the stronger will be his love, sincerity and worship. Additionally, the person who has the greatest servitude is the one who worships Allāh with **all** the Names and Attributes He has made known to mankind, as every Name of His has associated to it, a specific form of worship on the basis of '*knowledge and understanding*' and on the basis of '*state*'.

'*Knowledge and understanding*', i.e. whoever knows that Allāh is named with this particular Name and understands what Attribute it entails, then believes in it, this in itself is worship.

'*State*', i.e. every Name belonging to Allāh has a specific meaning and particular effect on the heart and character. If the heart therefore, comprehends the meaning of a specific Name, what it embodies and is conscious of it, it will reply to these meanings and this awareness and understanding will reflect in the person's thinking and mode of behaviour.

This method is extracted from the heart of the Qur'ān, Allāh says:

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا

"And to Allāh belong the most beautiful Names, so call upon Him by them..."[33]

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[32] *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'ādah*, 2/90.

[33] Sūrah al-A'rāf (7):180.

Calling upon Him (*du'ā*) incorporates: invoking Him, praising Him and worshipping Him. Allāh (*subḥānahu*) calls His servants to know Him by His Names and Attributes, to praise Him with them and to take their share of servitude from them.[34]

9. The Importance of Steering Clear of Falsehood and not Opposing the Way of Truth in this Domain

The realm of the Names and Attributes is regarded to be one of the most dangerous areas because of the fact that it has been the subject of severe and complex differences[35]. This war broke out between the *Salaf* at one end and the philosophers, *Ahl al-Kalām* (scholastics)[36] and *Mushabbihah* at the other.

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[34] *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, 1/420.

[35] There are a number of important points that have to be understood here, some of these are:

(a) The basic principle, is the simplicity, easiness and clarity of the whole religion, which includes this topic of Allāh's Names and Attributes.

(b) The complexity found within certain matters that pertain to the Names and Attributes does not emanate from the texts but instead from the philosophers and *Ahl al-Kalām* as a result of the innovations and unintelligible terminology they introduced. This impelled *Ahl al-Sunnah* to refute their falsehood...

(c) There lies no doubt that the fundamentals of this subject area, which our righteous predecessors are in agreement on, are built upon conclusive evidences, both in terms of the validity and establishment of such texts and in terms of the unequivocal meanings they indicate and signify. [t]

[36] *Ahl al-Kalām* (or *Mutakallimūn*) are the people of innovation, who spoke on areas of '*aqīdah* with false, innovated and censured speech. They are extreme in their reliance upon their deviant intellect at the expense of revelation. The philosophers however, are people of heresy who contest the concept of revelation and prophethood. They also discuss issues of '*aqīdah* upon the methodology of the Greek pagan philosophers. *Ahl al-Kalām* are much affected by the false principles and laws laid down by the philosophers. Moreover, there are a number of people who are mistakenly attributed to Islām but are in fact philosophers, who are actually outside the fold of Islām because of their evident heresy. There are a number of differences between *Ahl al-Kalām* and the philosophers just as there are a number of similarities. For a detailed explanation one can for example refer to Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Buraykān's work, *Ta'rīf al-Khalaf bi Manhaj al-Salaf*, Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, K.S.A. [t]

Hence it is from the obligatory duties of the student of knowledge to profoundly understand to a deep level the truth that is based upon the Book and Sunnah. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

فَإِن تَنَٰزَعۡتُمۡ فِي شَيۡءٖ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَٱلرَّسُولِ

"...and if you differ in anything, then refer it back to Allāh and the Messenger..."[37]

Referral back to Allāh is accomplished by referring back to His Book, and referral back to the Messenger (ﷺ) after his demise is accomplished by referring back to his Sunnah.

Allāh (*ta'āla*) also says:

ءَأَنتُمۡ أَعۡلَمُ أَمِ ٱللَّهُ

"...are you more knowledgeable or is Allāh?..."[38]

Allāh is more knowledgeable about Himself and He is the One who has informed us of His Names and Attributes in His Book and upon the tongue of His Messenger (ﷺ).

More so, the Prophet is the most knowledgeable person of his Lord as well as being the most truthful in speech, and Allāh has said of him:

وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ ٱلۡهَوَىٰٓ ﴿٣﴾ إِنۡ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحۡيٞ يُوحَىٰ ﴿٤﴾

"Nor does he speak from his desire. It is but a revelation which is revealed"[39]

It is compulsory upon the Muslim to study this field and to attain a deep understanding of it in accordance to what is found in the Book and Sunnah[40].

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[37] Sūrah al-Nisā' (4):59.

[38] Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):140.

[39] Sūrah al-Najm (53):3-4.

[40] The obligation for the layman is to acquire the knowledge he is required to be aware of, without having to delve too deeply, in this field and any other area of Islamic knowledge. The intention of the author here however, is to express that as for the one who wants to proficiently study this field (the student of knowledge he refers to in an earlier paragraph) then he has to obtain such knowledge upon the methodology of the Book and Sunnah. [t]

He must be wary of the philosophical tendencies that brought harm to their advocators and which introduced them to endless deviation and loss. These tendencies barred the knowledge of their Lord from reaching their hearts. Consequently, their hearts darkened and became ignorant of the realities of *īmān*. This caused them to turn away from Allāh and His remembrance and from loving Him and praising Him with His qualities of Perfection and Attributes of Majesty. As a result, the vigour of their love, longing and intimacy was directed elsewhere.

It is a common fact that the servant cannot attain any knowledge or *īmān* for that matter, until he believes in the Names and Attributes of the Lord and he knows them to a level that removes him from the bounds of being ignorant of Him.

Thus, *īmān* in the Names and Attributes of Allāh and understanding them is the foundation of Islām, the principle of *īmān* and the fruit of the tree of *iḥsān*.

Whosoever denies them has indeed destroyed this foundation of Islām, principle of *īmān* and fruit of the tree of *iḥsān*, let alone, for him to be attributed to those who possess exceptional gnostic knowledge.

The believer therefore, must exert all his capabilities towards understanding and knowing the Names and Attributes. Furthermore, his understanding must be free of the diseases of *at-Ta'ṭīl* and *al-Tamthīl* which have put to trial many of the people of innovation, who stand in opposition to what the Messenger (ﷺ) brought.

Correct knowledge is that which is taken from the Book and Sunnah, and which has been narrated from the Companions and their followers in righteousness. This is the beneficial knowledge which forever keeps its occupant at a high level of *īmān*, a strong degree of certainty and in a tranquil state of affairs.

CHAPTER 1

The Definition of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt* and its Relationship to the Other Categories of *Tawḥīd*

Two areas of discussion:

1. The definition of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt*
2. Its relationship to the other categories of *Tawḥīd*

The Definition of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt*

Definitions and explanations that offer information on a particular matter precede their rulings, since passing judgement on a matter is dependent on first acquiring the right perception of it.

Hence, whoever judges a matter before understanding it and perceiving it in a well distinct manner has indeed committed a hideous mistake.[41]

The definition of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt*:

> *To single out Allāh with His most beautiful Names and most exalted Attributes mentioned in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and to have īmān in their meanings and rulings.*

Explanation of the terms found in the definition:

1. *"To single out Allāh"*

This is the meaning of *Tawḥīd* [تَوْحِيْد]

The verb for this word is *waḥḥada* [وَحَّدَ]; the derivatives of this particular stem are therefore: *waḥḥada*, *yuwaḥḥidu*, *tawḥīdan* [وَحَّدَ يُوَحِّدُ تَوْحِيْدًا], i.e. to make something one or to single it out.

Its actual original root [وحد] lexically, centres around the meaning of something being alone and single.

Thus, if one says: "*Tawḥīd* of Allāh with His Names", the meaning will be: "To single out Allāh with His Names".

2. *"...with His Most Beautiful Names"*

(i) His Names: the word '*ism*' [name, اِسْم] lexically, is the term that is used to signify a meaning through identification or distinction.

It can also be defined as: the term that indicates an essence and the Attributes present within it.

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[41] *Al-Tawḍīḥ wa al-Bayān li Shajarah al-Īmān*, page 7.

Some of the Names of Allāh are Allāh, al-Raḥmān, al-Raḥīm, al-Ghafūr, al-'Azīz, al-Qadīr, al-Samī', al-Baṣīr and al-Bāri.

(ii) most beautiful: al-Ḥusnā [ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ], this is an adjective for the Names of Allāh and it is mentioned in the Noble Qur'ān.

- **The *āyāt* that mention this term**

  This adjective for the Names of Allāh is mentioned in four places in His Book:

  1. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

  وَلِلَّهِ ٱلْأَسْمَآءُ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ

  "And to Allāh belong the *most beautiful* Names..."[42]

  2. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

  قُلِ ٱدْعُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ أَوِ ٱدْعُوا۟ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنَ ۖ أَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوا۟ فَلَهُ ٱلْأَسْمَآءُ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ

  "Say, 'Invoke Allāh or invoke the Most Gracious, by whatever Name you invoke Him with (it is the same); for to Him belong the *most beautiful* Names..."[43]

  3. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

  ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ لَهُ ٱلْأَسْمَآءُ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ ﴿٨﴾

  "Allāh, none has the right to be worshipped except He; to Him belong the *most beautiful* Names."[44]

  4. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

  هُوَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْخَٰلِقُ ٱلْبَارِئُ ٱلْمُصَوِّرُ ۖ لَهُ ٱلْأَسْمَآءُ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ

  "He is Allāh, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; to Him belong the *most beautiful* Names..."[45]

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[42] Sūrah al-A'rāf (7):180.

[43] Sūrah al-Isrā' (17):110.

[44] Sūrah Ṭāhā (20):8.

[45] Sūrah al-Ḥashr (59):24.

- **Its morphology**[46]

  Ḥusnā [حُسْنَى] is based on the pattern: *fuʿlā* [فُعْلَى] which is the feminine form of *afʿal* [أَفْعَل], this is known in grammar to be a noun of preference (elative)[47].

  Ḥusnā [حُسْنَى] is therefore the feminine form of *aḥsan* [أَحْسَن], just as *kubrā* [كُبْرَى] is the feminine form of *akbar* [أَكْبَر] and *sughrā* [صُغْرَى] is the feminine form of *asghar* [أَصْغَر].

  Consequently, the one who asserts that *ḥusnā* [حُسْنَى] is the feminine form of *ḥasan* [حَسَن] is in clear error, because the feminine form of *ḥasan* [حَسَن] is *ḥasanah* [حَسَنَة].

  In light of the above, it is incorrect to say that the Names of Allāh are *ḥasanah* [beautiful, حَسَنَة]. The correct expression is to say that the Names of Allāh are *ḥusnā* [most beautiful, حُسْنَى] as He Himself has described them as such.

- **Its meaning**

  Ḥusnā [حُسْنَى] expresses the extreme degree of beauty.

- **The general understanding of the *āyah*:**

  لَهُ ٱلْأَسْمَآءُ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ

  "And to Him belong the most beautiful Names"

  Allāh possesses the most beautiful and majestic of Names, because of what they convey of the best, noblest and most beautiful of meanings.

- **The ruling derived from this**

  It is obligatory to believe in this adjective which Allāh has given to His Names. This is accomplished by possessing a firm belief that the Names of Allāh are the most beautiful Names and that they entail perfect and complete meanings.

  There are other rulings found within this adjective which we will discuss in the detailed issues related to the most beautiful Names of Allāh (in a future separate study).

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[46] i.e. study of word formation. [t]

[47] i.e. the superlative form of an adjective or verb which expresses the highest or a very high degree of a quality (e.g. bravest, most fiercely). [t]

3. *"...His Most Exalted Attributes":*

(i) His Attributes: the word '*ṣifah*' [attribute, صِفَة] lexically, denotes (either) a *dhātiyyah*, *maʿnawiyyah* or *fiʿliyyah* quality that is ascribed to an essence, which distinguishes it from other essences.

The following are some of Allāh's (*ʿazza wa jalla*) Attributes:

> (*dhātiyyah*): two Hands, Face, two Eyes and Fingers.
>
> (*maʿnawiyyah*): Knowledge, Capability, Life and Will.
>
> (*fiʿliyyah*): Descending, Ascension, Creating and Sustaining.[48]

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[48] Stated below, is a proof for each of the Attributes mentioned above:

- **Two Hands**

  Allāh says: **"He (Allāh) said, 'O Iblīs! What prevented you from prostrating to whom I have created with *both my Hands*? ..."** Sūrah Ṣād (38):75

- **Face**

  Allāh says: **"And the *Face* of your Lord full of Majesty and Honour will remain."** Sūrah al-Raḥmān (55): 27

- **Two Eyes**

  The Prophet said: *"...However, I am about to tell you something that no Prophet has told to his people: know that Dajjal is one-eyed and Indeed Allāh is* ***not one-eyed*** *(i.e. He has two eyes)."* Recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in many books such as the book of Jihād, Manners & *Tawḥīd*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* in the two chapters: *Īmān* & Trials and Tribulations, and other sources.

- **Fingers**

  The Prophet said: *"The hearts of the children of ādam are all between* ***two Fingers of the Fingers*** *of al-Raḥmān, like a single heart; He turns them how He chooses..."* Recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, chapter on *Qadar* and other sources.

- **Knowledge**

  Allāh says: **"...and that Allāh completely comprehends all things with His *Knowledge*."** Sūrah al-Ṭalāq (65):12

- **Capability**

  Allāh says: **"...Indeed, Allāh is over all things *Omnipotent*"** Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):20

(ii) Most Exalted/Loftiest: al-ʿUlā [ٱلْعُلَى], this adjective has been mentioned in the Noble Qur'ān[49].

- **The *āyāt* that mention this term**

 1. Allāh (*taʿāla*) says:

 لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
 بِالْآخِرَةِ مَثَلُ السَّوْءِ وَلِلَّهِ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

 "For those who do not believe in the Hereafter is an evil description and for Allāh is the *highest* description; and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."[50]

• **Will**

Allāh says: **"He most certainly does what He *Wills*"** Sūrah al-Burūj (85):16

• **Descent**

The Prophet said: "*Our Lord (tabāraka wa taʿāla), descends every night to the lowest heaven when the last third of the night remains and He says, 'Who is invoking Me so that I may answer him, who is asking of Me so that I may give Him, who is seeking My forgiveness so that I may forgive him.*" [t] A *mutawātir ḥadīth* related by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the books: *Al-Tawḥīd*, *al-Tahajjud* and *al-Daʿawāt*; Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the Book: The Prayer of the travellers and it's shortening,, and other sources.

• **Ascension**

Allāh says: **"The Most-Beneficent ascended over the Throne."** Sūrah ṬāHā (20):5

• **Creating**

Allāh says: **"All praise is for Allāh, Who created the heavens and earth…"** Sūrah al-Anʿām (6):1

• **Sustaining**

Allāh says: **"…Verily, Allāh sustains whom He wills, without limit."** Sūrah āl ʿImrān (3): 37 [t]

[49] The discussion of this word now follows in its masculine and singular form, *al-Aʿlā* [الأعلى]. [t]

[50] Sūrah al-Naḥl (16):60.

2. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

وَهُوَ ٱلَّذِى يَبْدَؤُا۟ ٱلْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُۥ وَهُوَ أَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ ۚ وَلَهُ ٱلْمَثَلُ ٱلْأَعْلَىٰ فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٧﴾

"And it is He who originates creation, then will repeat it (after it has perished), and this is easier for Him. His is the *highest* description in the heavens and in the earth; and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."[51]

There are numerous *āyāt* in the Glorious Qur'ān that indicate the perfection of Allāh's Attributes. A detailed discussion on this will feature later (in a separate study) within the detailed issues related to the Attributes of Allāh.

- **Its morphology**[52]

A'lā [أَعْلَى] [53] is based on the pattern: *af'al* [أَفْعَل] ,this is known in grammar to be a noun of preference (elative)[54].

- **The meaning of the *āyah*:**

Al-Qurṭubī commentated:

ولله المثل الأعلى i.e. the highest description.[55]

Ibn Kathīr said:

ولله المثل الأعلى i.e. absolute perfection from every perspective.[56]

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[51] Sūrah al-Rūm (30):27.

[52] i.e. study of word formation. [t]

[53] The meaning of *al-A'lā* [الأَعْلَى] is higher, highest, upper, uppermost, most exalted, loftiest etc. [t]

[54] i.e. the superlative form of an adjective or verb which expresses the highest or a very high degree of a quality (e.g., bravest, most fiercely). [t]

[55] *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Vol. 10, Pg. 119.

[56] *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Vol. 2, Pg. 573.

Ibn al-Sa'dī stated:

وللہ المثل الأعلى It is in reference to every Attribute of perfection and with regard to every perfection in existence, Allāh is more deserving of it in a manner that does not necessitate imperfection in any way.[57]

- **The ruling derived from this**

  It is obligatory to believe in everything that Allāh has mentioned about Himself. This is achieved by possessing a firm belief that all the Attributes, which Allāh has informed us of in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger, are Attributes of perfection. They do not contain imperfections in any way whatsoever, for He (*subḥānahu*) possesses the right to absolute perfection in every respect.

  Imām Ibn al-Qayyim says: "The highest description [المثل الأعلى] comprises the affirmation of the most exalted Attributes for Allāh (*subḥānahu*), their presence in knowledge[58] and it comprises mentioning, remembering and worshipping the Lord (*subḥānahu*) with them..."[59]

4. *"...mentioned in the Qur'ān and Sunnah"*:

It is mandatory to stay within the limits of the Names and Attributes of Allāh mentioned by the texts of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, not adding to them or subtracting anything from them.

Thus, we do not name Allāh, nor describe Him with a name or quality which He Himself has not named or described Himself with in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger (ﷺ).

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[57] *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān fī Tafsīr Kalām al-Mannān*, Vol. 4, Pg. 104.

[58] The presence of something is of types. The attribute of hearing for Allāh, for example, has a presence that is real and with Allāh. This refers to the reality and existence of the attribute as it truly is. It also takes on a presence in the knowledge of a Muslim i.e. he is aware, knows and affirms this attribute in a manner that is befitting to the Majesty of Allāh. Further, it also has a written presence as one can see and read from the Qur'ān and a spoken presence when someone mentions it. [t]

[59] *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Mursalah*, 1/1034, abridged.

This is because of the fact that there is no way to acquire knowledge of Allāh's Names and Attributes except by one way: the way of *khabr* (related information, i.e. revelation), which is the Book and *Sunnah*.

Hence, if one was to assert that Allāh Hears without the use of ears and a second person asserted that Allāh hears via the use of ears, we would judge **both** to be in error because there is no mention in the texts as to the affirmation or negation of ears. The correct stance is to assert that Allāh Hears in a manner befitting His Majesty, in accordance with texts attesting to that.

Furthermore, Allāh has prohibited us from speaking without knowledge, He (*ta'āla*) has said:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِۦ عِلْمٌ

"And do not follow that which you have no knowledge of..."[60]

Therefore, affirmation or negation is not permissible except with textual evidence.

Imām Aḥmad (d. 241 H), may Allāh have mercy upon him, said: "Allāh is not to be described except with what He Himself and His Messenger have described Him with; we do not exceed the boundaries of the Qur'ān and Sunnah."[61]

Ibn 'Abdil-Barr (d. 463 H), may Allāh have mercy upon him, said: "With respect to belief, in its totality, there do not reside any Names or Attributes except that they have been specifically mentioned in the Book of Allāh, are authentically reported from the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ)

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[60] Sūrah al-Isrā' (17):36.

[61] *Al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyyah*, pg. 61.

or have been agreed upon by the *ummah*[62]; and as for the *āḥād*[63] reports narrated in this area, entirely, or in other similar areas, then they are accepted and not to be challenged."[64]

5. "...and to have īmān in their meanings and rulings."

i.e. to have *īmān* in the meanings that these Attributes possess and also in the requisites and rulings derived from them.

This is in fact, what both the Qur'ān and Sunnah command and encourage.

An example of this from the Qur'ān is the saying of Allāh (*ta'āla*):

وَلِلَّهِ ٱلْأَسْمَآءُ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ فَٱدْعُوهُ بِهَا

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[62] There do not exist Names or Attributes of Allāh that have been agreed upon by the *ummah*, which have **not** been related in the Book or Sunnah. However, the establishment of Allāh's Names and Attributes are of different levels. Some are in the Book alone, some are in the Sunnah alone and others are in the Book and Sunnah and others are not only in the Book and Sunnah but are also agreed upon by the *ummah* as a whole. This last category probably refers to the type of Attributes that the creation can conclude through simply looking at the construction and contents of this universe; for example, one decisively concludes that the Creator is characterised with Knowledge, Wisdom, Ability, etc. This may be the intention of Ibn 'Abdil-Barr here and Allāh knows best. [t]

[63] The categorisation of ḥadith from the perspective of the number of channels a particular narration reaches us is of two categories: (i) *Al-Mutawātir*, which is defined to be a ḥadith that is narated by such a number of reporters in every level of its transmission that it is inconceivable for them all to have agreed upon a lie or accidentally arrived at the same account of events. (ii) *Al-Āḥād*, which is simply, the ḥadith that does not satisfy the conditions of the *mutawātir ḥadīth*. Ibn 'Abdil-Barr here is pointing out the established fundamental amongst the scholars of ḥadith and *Ahl al-Sunnah* which is that they do not differentiate between the *aḥādīth* that are *aḥād* and those that are *mutawātir* in the matter of what one bases one's belief upon. The real condition in this regard is whether the actual ḥadith is authentic or not. Such a differentiation - between *mutawātir* and *aḥād* - in this regard is an innovation, is contrary to the consensus of the early generations and has been refuted by scholars of old and new alike. [t]

[64] *Jāmi' Bayān al-'Ilm wa Faḍlih*, page 96.

"And to Allāh belong the most beautiful Names so invoke Him with them..."[65]

The proof from the *āyah* is **'so invoke Him with them'**

The deduction is that Allāh calls upon His servants to know Him by His Names and Attributes, to praise Him, and to take their share of servitude from them.

Thus, supplicating to Allāh with His Names and Attributes includes:

1. Supplication of request[66], e.g. saying, 'O my lord, grant me sustenance'.
2. Supplication of praise[67], e.g. saying, 'Exalted and perfect is Allāh'.
3. Supplication of worship[68], e.g. bowing and prostrating.[69]

An example from the Sunnah is the saying of the Prophet (ﷺ): "*To Allāh belong ninety nine Names, one hundred less one; whosoever enumerates them will enter paradise.*"[70]

The proof from the ḥadīth is '*whosoever enumerates them*'

The deduction being that the meaning of '*enumerates them*' is to memorise their wordings, understand their meanings and indications, and to act by their requisites and rulings.

Hence, knowledge of Allāh's Names and Attributes and believing that Allāh possesses these Names and descriptions is a form of worship.

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[65] Sūrah al-A'rāf (7):180.

[66] *Du'ā al-Mas'alah*: a supplication that contains a request for the acquisition of benefit or the protection from harm.

[67] *Du'ā al-Thanā'*: a supplication that contains glorification and praise of Allāh, and is void of any request.

[68] *Du'ā al-Ta'abbud*: physical acts of worship like prayer etc., as they are also forms of supplication.

[69] *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, 1/420.

[70] Related by al-Bukhārī, see *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, Vol. 13, p. 377, ḥadīth no. 7392, and by Muslim, Vol. 8, p. 63.

Likewise, the heart's grasp of their meanings, the requisites and rulings they embody, and its consciousness and response to this, to a level which will lead to sound thinking and upright character is also worship.

Therefore, *Ahl al-Sunnah* believe in the meanings indicated by the Names and Attributes of Allāh, as well as the requisites and rulings which result from them, contrary to the people of falsehood who deny and negate this.

Ahl al-Sunnah believe that every Name of Allāh indicates a meaning which we label '*Attribute*'. This is why it is necessary for the one who believes in the Names of Allāh (*ta'āla*) to observe and take into account the following points:

- To believe that Allāh (*'azza wa jalla*) possesses that particular Name.
- To believe in the meaning i.e. the attribute, indicated by this Name.
- To believe in the effects, rulings and requisites associated to this Name.

Take the Name *al-Samī'* [The All-Hearer, السَّمِيْع] as an example:

It is a Name from amongst Allāh's most beautiful Names, so the following is required to possess *īmān* in it:

1. To affirm the Name **al-Samī'** by believing that it is from amongst the most beautiful Names of Allāh.
2. To affirm that **Hearing** is an Attribute of Allāh
3. To affirm the ruling (i.e. the action), which is that Allāh **Hears** the secrets and private discourses, and to affirm the requisite and effect, which is the obligation of fearing Allāh, observing His presence, to revere and be shy from Him (*'azza wa jalla*).

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said: "Every Name of His has associated to it, a specific form of worship on the basis of '*knowledge and understanding*' and on the basis of '*state*'.

'*Knowledge and understanding*', i.e. whoever knows that Allāh is named with this particular Name and understands what Attribute it entails, then believes in it, this in itself is worship.

'*State*', i.e. every Name belonging to Allāh has a specific meaning and particular effect on the heart and character. If the heart therefore, comprehends the meaning of a specific Name, what it embodies and is conscious of it, it will reply to these meanings, and this awareness and understanding will reflect in the person's thinking and mode of behaviour"[71]

The case is the same concerning the Attributes of Allāh (*'azza wa jalla*); one must believe in their meanings and rulings. This is the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* which is converse to the belief of the *Mu'aṭṭilah* who negated the meanings which these Attributes entailed and tampered with them by distorting and changing their meanings.

Ahl al-Sunnah deem it necessary for the one who wants to affirm these Attributes and possess the belief that they are Attributes of perfection affirmed for Allāh in a real sense, to observe and take into account the following points:

1. To affirm the Attribute, hence, he does not negate or refute it.
2. Not to overstep the specific Name given to this Attribute, rather, he must respect the Name given to this Attribute just as he respects the Attribute itself. Hence, he does not nullify the Attribute nor does he change its Name by giving it another, as do the *Jahmiyyah al-Mu'aṭṭilah* with regard to the Hearing, Sight and Speech of Allāh, by terming them *a'rāḍ*. They also term His Face,

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[71] *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, 1/420.

Hands and Foot, *jawāriḥ* and *ab' āḍ*. They term His Highness over His creation and Ascension over His Throne, *taḥayyuz*.[72]

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[72] It is from the methodology of the people of innovation that they seek to estrange and make repulsive, by adopting falsehood, the methodology of *Ahl al-Sunnah*, the people of ḥadith, the *Salaf* of this *ummah*. One of the means they adopt to achieve this is to hurl false charges at the methodology and belief of the *Salaf*, which have no legitimate basis whatsoever. An example of this is their accusation that *Ahl al-Sunnah* commit *tashbīh* and *tamthīl* in the area of Allāh's Names and Attributes. The foreign terms mentioned above by the author are employed by them in an attempt to justify this accusation.

The word *a' rāḍ* is the plural of *' araḍ*, one of its meanings is an accidental characteristic. The people of innovation slander *Ahl al-Sunnah* saying that *Ahl al-Sunnah* affirm such *a' rāḍ* for Allāh and hence, this is a *tashbih* (likening) that is not permissible because of their premise: "*a' rāḍ* can only exist alongside a body". This argumentation of theirs, which relies on flawed premises and vague terminology that is used inconsistently, is refuted in many ways. What the people of innovation actually intend by *a' rāḍ* here, are the Attributes Allāh has mentioned in His Book and on the tongue of His Messenger such as His Hearing, Sight and Speech.

The word *jawāriḥ* is the plural of *jāriḥah*, which means a bodily limb such as one's hand and leg. This is the meaning of the attribute with regards to its relation to a human being. However when the specific Attributes of Hands, Eyes, etc are affirmed for Allāh – because He himself has revealed this to us - then such an affirmation is done so in a manner that befits His Majesty without any likeness to His creation and *Ahl al-Sunnah* do not label such Attributes as being *jawāriḥ*. The people of innovation however slander by saying, '*Ahl al-Sunnah* affirm limbs for Allāh'. The same is the case for the word *ab' āḍ*. It is the plural of *ba' ḍ*, which means some, a part or a portion of something. When *Ahl al-Sunnah* affirmed for Allāh the Attributes He affirmed for Himself, the people of innovation slandered them by saying, '*Ahl al-Sunnah* liken Allāh to His creation by affirming parts to Him.'

The word *taḥayyuz* is from the verb *taḥayyaza*, which carries meanings such as to occupy, isolate oneself and seclude oneself. *Ahl al-Sunnah* affirm for Allāh His ascension above the throne as He Himself has mentioned that in seven places in His Book. They affirm that Allāh is above His creation and with this belief they hold that He (*ta' āla*) is not contained, confined or encompassed by a place, direction or creation. The people of innovation however, slander *Ahl al-Sunnah* by saying that they believe that Allāh is in a place and direction that has confined, taken hold of Him and encompassed Him, highly exalted He is above that.

From this context, the oppression comitted by the people of innovation of *Ahl al-Sunnah* developed in that they concocted terms foreign to the language of the *Sharī' ah*

3. Not to liken the Attribute to that of the creations, for there is nothing like Allāh in His essence, Attributes and actions.

4. To give up all hope of comprehending the true nature and descriptive designation of the attribute. The (sound) mind has indeed abandoned (the notion of) gaining knowledge of the true nature and quality of the attribute because none knows ***how*** Allāh is except Allāh Himself. This is the meaning of the declaration of *Ahl al-Sunnah* '***without kayf (assigning any description)***'[73] i.e. without any qualification which the mind can comprehend[74]. Since, if the reality of the essence is not known, then how can one know the reality and nature of the Attributes?

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and *Ahl al-Sunnah*, attributed them to *Ahl al-Sunnah* and then sought to refute them to show how the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* was one of *tashbīh* when the reality is that it was the people of innovation who in fact committed *tashbīh* - as will be shown further in this book, since they did not differentiate between the Attributes of the Creator and those of His creation, so they likened firstly and negated secondly.

Note further, that I have stated that the people of innovation say, '*Ahl al-Sunnah* say...' They do not actually say, '*Ahl al-Sunnah*' but use other terms like 'Salafis', 'the literalists', 'the people of ḥadīth' and so on, because it is also from their methodology to try to alienate those who truly adhere to what the *Salaf* were upon by taking away this title from them and claiming it for themselves, since all but the Shī'ah, have a desire to place their claim on following the way of *Ahl al-Sunnah* and the masses comprehend the general understanding that the way of *Ahl al-Sunnah* and their *Imāms* is the praiseworthy way that is to be followed. The truth however, is in the reality, which is ascertained through a proper examination of what the *Salaf*, *Ahl al-Sunnah* were truly upon and succeeding in this by being sincere and just. This reality being, whoever does not hold onto the belief in the Names and Attributes of Allāh in the manner detailed in this book then he is not of *Ahl al-Sunnah* in this regard, irrespective of how hard he tries to hold onto that title and of how hard he tries to distance others from it. [t]

[73] A complete explanation will feature further on in the book. [t]

[74] i.e. the negation on part of the *Salaf* of any qualification of the Attributes is because of the fact that the mind cannot grasp it and not because the Attributes have no description. The Attributes do possess a reality but this knowledge is from the *ghayb* just as the essence of Allāh is from the *ghayb*. So this is a negation of one's knowledge of this reality and not a negation of the reality itself. [t]

This does not undermine *īmān* in these Attributes nor does it invalidate the knowledge of their meanings, as the issue of qualification is an additional matter beyond this.[75]

5. To implement and actualise the requisite and effect associated to the Attribute. Every Attribute has a specific form of servitude connected to it. These are the requisites of the Attributes, i.e. the requisites of possessing knowledge and correctly understanding the Attribute.

So, the servant's knowledge that the Lord alone can create, sustain, give life and cause death will produce for him the worship of *tawakkul*, and his knowledge of Allāh's Majesty, Greatness and Might will generate for him humility, submission and love.

The Relationship Between the Categories of Tawḥīd

It may be appropriate here after having explained the definition of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt* to mention the relationship between this category and the remaining categories of *Tawḥīd*.

As a preliminary step towards this, I will first mention the various categorisations of *Tawḥīd* adopted by the scholars.

Categories of *Tawḥīd*

Scholars of *Ahl al-Sunnah* differ in the manner of determining the categories of *Tawḥīd*. Despite this variation however, their content is one and the same. The probable reason behind this variation is the fact that these categorisations have been deduced as a result of researching and analysing the texts (of the *Sharī'ah*) where they do not exist as specified and defined categories.

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[75] *Madārij al-Sālikeen*, 3/358-359, slightly abridged.

In light of the above, some scholars[76] have categorised *Tawḥīd* into three categories:

1. *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* (Lordship): to single out Allāh with His actions such as Creating and Sustaining.
2. *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt* (Names and Attributes): the definition of which has already preceded.
3. *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah* (Worship): to single out Allāh with the slaves' actions of worship such as prayer, fasting and supplication.

More recently, certain people have added a fourth category to the three previously mentioned and have named it:

4. *Tawḥīd al-Ittibā'* (Adherence) or *Tawḥīd al-Ḥākimiyyah* (i.e. to designate the Book and Sunnah as law and to refer back to it for judgement).

However, the one who has mentioned this category should observe that it is, in reality, already included in *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah* (Worship), because worship is legally accepted only if it satisfies two conditions:

1. *al-Ikhlāṣ* (sincerity)
2. *al-Ittibā*; (adherence), as Allāh (*ta'āla*) has said:

فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُواْ
لِقَآءَ رَبِّهِۦ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَٰلِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِۦٓ أَحَدًۢا ﴿١١٠﴾

"...so whosoever hopes to meet his Lord should perform righteous actions and not associate anyone in worship of His Lord."[77]

Other scholars have categorised *Tawḥīd* into two categories. This is the most common method found in the writings of the early scholars,

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[76] Refer to *Ṭarīq al-Hijratayn*, page 30, *Sharḥ al-Ṭahāwiyyah*, page 76, *Lawāmi' al-Anwār* by al-Safārini, 1/128 and *Taysīr al-'Azīz al-Ḥamīd*, pages 17-19.

[77] Sūrah al-Kahf (18):110.

for they combine both *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* and *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt* into one category. This is done from the perspective that these two categories in total represent the area of *knowledge* and *understanding* of Allāh (*ʿazza wa jalla*), whereas *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah* represents the area of *action* intended to Allāh.

The classification of *Tawḥīd* into three categories is from the perspective of what *Tawḥīd* itself pertains to and the classification of *Tawḥīd* into two categories relates back to the perspective of what is obligatory upon the *muwaḥḥid* (one who professes *tawḥīd*).

So some scholars have said *Tawḥīd* is classified into the following two categories[78]:

1. *Tawḥīd al-Maʿrifah wa l-Ithbāt* (Knowledge and Affirmation):

These scholars have in mind by this expression both *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* and *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt*. The reason behind the terminology 'Tawḥid al-Maʿrifah' is that knowledge of Allāh (*ʿazza wa jalla*) is attained by none other than knowledge of His Names, Attributes and actions. As for the term 'al-Ithbāt', it means to affirm those Names, Attributes and Actions that Allāh has affirmed for Himself.

2. *Tawḥīd al-Qaṣd wa al-Ṭalab* (Intent and Pursuit):

Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah is meant by this phrase. It was named *Tawḥīd 'al-Qaṣd wa al-Ṭalab'* because the servant turns to Allāh with his heart, tongue and limbs in worship of Him alone, out of hope and fear. The slave's intention and pursuit behind this is the Countenance of Allāh and the desire for His pleasure.

Another group of scholars classified *Tawḥīd* into the following two categories[79]:

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[78] Ibn al-Qayyim mentions this in *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, 3/449.

[79] Ibn al-Qayyim mentions this in *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, 3/450.

1. ***Al-Tawḥīd al-ʿIlmī al-Khabarī***: (Knowledge-based and Text- based *Tawḥīd*)

The intended meaning is *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* and *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt*.

It was named *al-Tawḥīd al-ʿIlmī* because it concentrates on the area of knowledge of Allāh. As for the word 'al-Khabarī', this is in light of the fact that this knowledge is dependent upon *khabr* (revealed text), i.e. the Book and *Sunnah*.

2. ***Al-Tawḥīd al-Irādī al-Ṭalabī*** (Wilful and Pursuing based *Tawḥīd*):

The intended meaning is *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*. It was named '*al-Tawḥīd al-Irādī*' because the servant possesses a will with respect to acts of worship; he either performs that act of worship or chooses not to. It was termed *al-Ṭalabī* because the slave seeks with that worship the Face of Allāh and he has Allāh in mind and heart with those actions of worship.

Another group of scholars classify *Tawḥīd* into the following two categories[80]:

1. ***Al-Tawḥīd al-Qawlī*** (Speech-based *Tawḥīd*):

The intent behind this is *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* and *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt*. It was named *Qawlī* because it stands opposite to *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah* which concentrates on the action based side of *Tawḥīd* (i.e. *al-ʿAmalī*). As for this side, it is specifically based on belief and knowledge.

2. ***Tawḥīd al-ʿAmalī*** (Action-based *Tawḥīd*):

Its meaning is *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*. It was named *ʿAmalī* because it encompasses the actions of the heart, tongue and limbs which in total represent the area of action with respect to *Tawḥīd*.

Thus, *Tawḥīd* has two sides: one of belief and knowledge and the other pertaining to submission and action.

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[80] Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned this. Refer to *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā*, 1/367.

Yet another group of scholars classify *Tawḥīd* into the following two categories:

1. ***Tawḥīd al-Siyādah*** (Sovereignty):

Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah and *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt* are intended by this. It was termed as such because the unique possession of these Actions, Names and Attributes by Allāh obligate absolute Sovereignty and complete right of disposal in this universe be it in the realm of creation, sustenance, giving life, causing death, disposing or governing, (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*). Thus, the *muwaḥḥid* must single out Allāh in this respect.

2. ***Tawḥīd al-'Ibādah*** (Worship):

The meaning of which is *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*. The naming of it as such is very clear and needs no further elaboration.

These are the various categorisations of the scholars that I have come across and they are all one and the same in content as just shown by relating each subsequent categorisation to the first. The difference between them is therefore confined to wording only, and Allāh knows best[81].

The Relationship Between the Categories of *Tawḥīd*

These categories in total represent the particular area of *īmān* in Allāh, which we name *Tawḥīd*. A person's *Tawḥīd* is not complete without the combination of all the three categories of *Tawḥīd*; they vouch for, necessitate and complete each other.

It is not possible to get by with one or two of these categories at the expense of the remaining category or categories. Thus, *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* is of no benefit without *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*. *Tawḥīd al-*

[81] Hence, it is a variational difference (*Ikhtilāf al-Tanawwu'*) and not a contradictory difference (*Ikhtilāf al-Taḍād*). Refer to Ibn Taymiyyah's *Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*...in which he discusses types of differences as well as expounding upon the sub-categories of variational differences, one of them being the differences found in expressions, definitions and classifications. [t]

Ulūhiyyah is not valid and cannot exist without *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* and likewise, the *Tawḥīd* of Allāh in both *al-Rubūbiyyah* and *al-Ulūhiyyah* is not correct without the *Tawḥīd* of Allāh in *al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt*.

Accordingly, the presence of flaws and deviations in any one of the categories is a flaw in *Tawḥīd* in its entirety[82], [for knowledge of Allāh cannot be without worship of Him and worship of Him cannot be without knowledge of Allāh; they necessitate each other].[83]

Scholars have clarified this relationship with their statement:

> *'It is a relationship of necessity, inclusion and comprehension.'*

Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah necessitates *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*. *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah* includes *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* and *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt* encompasses both *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* and *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt*.

To elaborate, one who acknowledges *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* and knows that Allāh (*subḥānahu*) alone is the Lord who has no partner in His Lordship, is necessitated and bound[84] by this acknowledgement to direct worship to Allāh alone (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*). This is because of the fact that only a lord, creator, owner and governor is fit to be worshipped. As He uniquely possesses these qualities, it is a must therefore that He alone be the object of worship.

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[82] Thus, a flaw or deviation in a particular category of *Tawḥīd* affects the other categories because of the strong connection and correlation between all the categories. If that flaw effects the basis of that particular category than the consequence will be a flaw in the basis of one's *Tawḥīd* in general. If however, the flaw effects and blemishes the perfection and completion of that particular category then the consequence will be a flaw and blemish in the completeness and perfection of one's *Tawḥīd* in general, may Allāh protect us all. [t]

[83] *Taḥdhīr Ahl al-Īmān*, 1/140 (within *Majmū'ah al-Rasā'il al-Munīriyyah*).

[84] This necessity and binding may fail to take effect, as was the case with the *kuffār* of the Quraysh. They acknowledged and affirmed *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* as the texts show but did not fulfil this requisite of affirming *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* (which was to acknowledge and affirm *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*).

For this reason, it has been the pattern of the Noble Qur'ān to relate the *āyāt* on al-Rubūbiyyah together with *āyāt* on the calling to *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*. An example of this is the saying of Allāh (*ta'āla*):

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ ٱعْبُدُوا۟ رَبَّكُمُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُمْ
وَٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ ٱلَّذِى جَعَلَ لَكُمُ
ٱلْأَرْضَ فِرَٰشًا وَٱلسَّمَآءَ بِنَآءً وَأَنزَلَ مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَأَخْرَجَ
بِهِۦ مِنَ ٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۖ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا۟ لِلَّهِ أَندَادًا وَأَنتُمْ
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

"O mankind, worship your Lord Who created you and those before you so that you may achieve *taqwā*, Who has made the earth a resting place for you, the sky a canopy and sent down rain from the sky bringing out by it crops and fruits as a provision for you. So do not set up rivals with Allāh (in your worship) when you know full well (that you have no other lord besides Him)".[85]

As for *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*, it embodies *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* because concerning one who worships Allāh and does not associate any thing with Him, this implicitly indicates that he believes that Allāh is His Lord and Owner, and that He is his only Lord.

This is a fact that the *muwaḥḥid* witnesses in himself. The mere fact he has singled out Allāh with worship and has not directed any form of worship to other than Allāh is not because of anything **but** his acknowledgement of *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* and that there is no lord, no owner or disposer of affairs except Allāh alone.

As for *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt*, it is comprehensive of both *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* and *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*. This is borne by the fact that *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt* stands on singling out Allāh with all the most beautiful Names and most exalted Attributes He possesses, which are not befitting for none but He (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*).

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[85] Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):21-2.

Some of these Names are al-Rabb (the Lord), al-Khāliq (the Creator), al-Rāziq (the Sustainer/Provider) and al-Malik (the King), and these pertain to *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah*[86].

Another group of these Names are Allāh (the Deity), al-Ghafūr (the Oft-Forgiving), al-Raḥīm (the Bestower of Mercy) and al-Tawwāb (the Oft-Returning), and these pertain to *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*[87].[88]

A beneficial side-point:

All of the Qur'ān is an Invitation to Tawḥid

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said:

"Every sūrah of the Qur'ān entails *Tawḥīd*. In fact, we assert a comprehensive statement: Every ***āyah*** in the Qur'ān entails *Tawḥīd*, is a witness to *Tawḥīd* and invites to it. Since the Qur'ān is either:

1. Information about Allāh and His Names, Attributes and Actions.

This is *Tawḥīd al-'Ilmī al-Khabarī.*

2. A call to worship Him alone without any partners and to renounce everything worshipped besides Allāh.

This is *Tawḥīd al-Irādī al-Ṭalabī.*

3. Commands and prohibitions, and the enjoining of obeying His commands and prohibitions.

These are the rights of *Tawḥīd* and are what perfect it.

4. Reports of Allāh's reverential treatment of those who establish His *Tawḥīd* and obedience, how they are treated in this world and how Allāh will honour them in the Hereafter.

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[86] i.e, one who singles out Allāh with these Names and Qualities has in effect singled Him out in matters of Lordship. [t]

[87] i.e. one who singles out Allāh with these Names and Qualities has likewise singled Allāh out in matters of worship. [t]

[88] Refer to *al-Kawāshif al-Jaliyyah 'an Ma'ānī al-Wāsiṭiyyah* of Shaykh 'Abdul-'Azīz al-Salmān, p. 421-422.

This is the reward of establishing His *Tawḥīd*, or

5. Reports on the people of *shirk*, the humiliation they underwent in this world and the punishment that will befall them in the next life.

This is information on those who are outside the ruling of His *Tawḥīd*.

Hence, all of the Qur'ān is on *Tawḥīd*, its rights and rewards, and on the issue of *shirk*, its people and their punishment.[89]

[89] *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, 3/449-450.

The Definition of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* and *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamāʿah*, an Explanation of their Belief in the Attributes and Names of Allāh and the Foundations that this Belief is Based upon

Three areas of discussion:

1. The definition of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* and *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah*
2. The belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamāʿah* in the Names and Attributes of Allāh
3. The foundations upon which their belief in the Names and Attributes of Allāh is based

The Definition of al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ and Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah

Definition of *al-Salaf* [السَّلَف]:

- LEXICAL MEANING OF THE WORD SALAF:

"*Salaf* [سَلَف] is the plural of *sālif* [سَالِف] which is based upon the same pattern as *ḥāris* [guard, حَارِس] and *ḥaras* [حَرَس] and *khādim* [servant, خَادِم] & *khadam* [خَدَم][90]. *Sālif* means a predecessor and *Salaf* means a preceding group."[91]

Ibn Fāris states: "Al-Sīn [س], al-Lām [ل] and al-Fā' [ف] is a root which indicates precedence and antecedence. A derivation of this root is *al-Salaf* which means those who have passed on, and a *sallāf* group i.e. predecessors."[92]

- THE (LEGAL) MEANING OF THE TERM AL-SALAF AL-ṢĀLIḤ [السَّلَفُ الصَّالِحُ]:

There are a number of opinions held by the scholars with respect to defining the *Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* from a time-perspective:

1. Certain scholars limit the application of this term to the *ṣaḥābah* (Companions) alone, may the pleasure of Allāh be upon them all.
2. Other scholars assert that they are the *ṣaḥābah* and the *tābiʿūn* (students and successors of the Companions)
3. Another group of scholars hold that they are the *ṣaḥābah*, the *tābiʿūn*

[90] All these words and their plurals are based upon the patterns *fāʿil* [فَاعِل] for the singular and *faʿal* [فَعَل] for the plural. [t]

[91] *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Vol. 9 p. 158.

[92] *Muʿjam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, Vol. 3, p. 95, lexical entry: [سلف].

and the *tābiʿū al-tābiʿīn* (students and successors to the successors of the Companions)[93]

The correct and common opinion held by the majority of the scholars of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamāʿah* is that the intended meaning of *al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* are the three favoured generations, whose excellence the Prophet (ﷺ) bore witness to when he said: *"The best of generations is the generation in which I have been sent, then those who succeed them, then those who succeed them."* The *ḥadīth* is agreed upon[94].

So the *Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* are the Companions, their successors and their subsequent successors.[95]

Anyone who follows their path and conducts himself according to their methodology is a *salafī*, in ascription to them.

Al-Salafiyyah is the term denoted to the methodology that the Prophet (ﷺ) and the favoured generations after him proceeded upon. This methodology will remain until Allāh will bring His command. This is in reference to the ḥadīth: *"There will not cease to be a group from amongst this ummah that will be victorious upon the truth. Those who forsake them will not harm them, up until the command of their Lord will come to pass them, and they will (at that time) be in this same state."*[96]

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[93] *Wasaṭiyyah Ahl al-Sunnah bayna al-Firaq*, Dr. Muḥammad Bākarīm, pp. 92-94 and *Kitāb Luzūm al-Jamāʿah*, Dr. Jamāl Bādī, pp. 276-277.

[94] It is related by al-Bukhārī, (5/199, 7/6 & 11/460) and Muslim, 7/184 & 185.

[95] To further explain, two perspectives combine together to precisely define the *Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*: (i) the time factor, which is found in the word *salaf* (predecessors); this has been shown to mean the first three generations. (ii) the methodology factor, which is found in the word *ṣāliḥ* (righteous); this means to be upon that which the Prophet (ﷺ) was upon in belief, speech and action.

The Companions, their students and subsequent students therefore truly fit this title. As for those present in the first three generations who were **not** upon the correct methodology then they are in fact the *Salaf al-Ṭāliḥ* [السَّلَف الطَّالِح], the unrighteous predecessors. Scholars have however become accustomed to using the general term *al-Salaf*, which only contains the time factor, to specifically mean the *Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*. [t]

[96] Related by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3/1523.

The ascription to this methodology is therefore correct and permissible as long as a person adheres to its conditions and principles; anyone who perseveres in securing sound belief and action in agreement with the understanding of the three favoured generations is a person who possesses a *salafī* methodology.

• Principles of the Salafī methodology

It is possible to concisely specify the pillars and principles of the Salafi methodology into the following points:

1. To accurately and meticulously define the texts of the Book and *Sunnah* and to understand them
2. To confine one's self with regard to the above, to the reports transmitted from the Companions, their successors and their successors in turn, in relation to the explanation and understanding of the Qur'ān and *aḥādīth*. This is achieved by:

    (i) Exerting efforts towards distinguishing the authentic reports from the inauthentic and,

    (ii) Exerting efforts towards seeking out their meanings and gaining understanding of it.[97]
3. To act in accordance with this knowledge and understanding, remaining upright upon this, be it in belief, thought, character or speech, and to be free and distant from everything that opposes and nullifies it.
4. To engage in inviting to this with both tongue and limbs.

One who adheres to these principles of belief and action is upon the *salafī* methodology, by Allāh's will.

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[97] *Bayān Faḍl 'Ilm al-Salaf 'alā al-Khalaf*, Ibn Rajab, pp. 150-152, and *Uṣūl al-I'tiqād Ahl al-Sunnah,* al-Lālakā'ī, vol. 1, pp. 9-10.

• Proofs for the obligation to follow the Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ and to adhere to their methodology

Firstly, from the Noble Qur'ān:

Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

وَٱلسَّٰبِقُونَ ٱلْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُهَٰجِرِينَ وَٱلْأَنصَارِ وَٱلَّذِينَ
ٱتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَٰنٍ رَّضِيَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا۟ عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ
لَهُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ تَجْرِى تَحْتَهَا ٱلْأَنْهَٰرُ خَٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآ أَبَدًا
ذَٰلِكَ ٱلْفَوْزُ ٱلْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

> **"And the former, the first from amongst the *Muhājirūn* and the *Anṣār*, and those who followed them in righteousness, Allāh is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. And He has prepared for them gardens of which rivers flow below, abiding therein forever, that is the great success."[98]**

Thus, Allāh is unreservedly pleased with the Muhājirūn and Anṣār, and is pleased with those who follow them in righteousness.[99]

Allāh (*ta'āla*) also says:

وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ ٱلرَّسُولَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ ٱلْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ
سَبِيلِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِۦ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِۦ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَآءَتْ مَصِيرًا

> **"And whoever opposes the Messenger after the guidance has become clearly manifest to him and follows a path other than that of the believers, We shall leave him to that which he has adopted and land him in Hell; what an evil destination!"[100]**

Allāh threatens those who follow a different path to the Companions with the punishment of Hell, and in the previous *āyah*, He promises His pleasure to those who follow them.

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[98] Sūrah al-Tawbah (9):100

[99] i.e. the attainment of Allāh's pleasure for the Companions is secure, whereas for those who come after them; this is not guaranteed, as it is dependent upon their adherence to the way of the Companions in righteousness (i.e. in belief and action). [t]

[100] Sūrah al-Nisā' (4):115.

Secondly, from the Sunnah:

1. The statement of the Prophet (ﷺ): *"The best of people are my generation, then those who succeed them, then those who succeed them"*[101]

This excellence and goodness which the Prophet (ﷺ) attested to for these three generations, is an indication of their preference, precedence and majestic rank as well as their knowledge of Allāh's laws and intense adherence to the way of His Messenger (ﷺ).

The following *aḥādīth* emphasise these (virtues):

2. The Messenger's statement: "The Jews split up into seventy-one sects, the Christians split up into seventy-two sects and this *ummah* will split up into seventy-three sects; all of them are in the Fire except one." Someone asked: "Which is that one O Messenger of Allāh?" He replied: "Whoever is upon that which I am upon today and my Companions."[102] This is a ḥadīth that is *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) and *mash-hūr* (well known).

3. His (ﷺ) saying: "...for indeed, those who will still be alive after me will see many differences; so hold fast to my Sunnah and to the sunnah of the rightly guided *Khalīfahs* after me. Adhere to and cling tightly to it and beware of newly-invented matters, for every newly-invented matter is an innovation and every innovation is a deviation."[103]

Hence, the Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged his *ummah* to follow his Sunnah and the sunnah of the rightly guided Khalīfahs after him at the appearance of splits and differences.

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[101] It is related by al-Bukhārī, (5/199, 7/6 & 11/460) and Muslim, 7/184 & 185.

[102] Related by Abū Dāwūd, 4596-4597; al-Tirmidhī, 2640-2641; Imām Aḥmad, (2/332, 3/120, 145 & 4/120) and Ibn Mājah, 3991-3993.

[103] Related by Imām Aḥmad, 4/126-127; Abū Dāwūd, 4607; al-Tirmidhī, 2676; al-Dārimī, 1/44 and others.

Thirdly, from the statements of the *Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* and their followers:

1. 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd, may Allāh be pleased with him, said: *"People will not cease to be in good as long as knowledge emanating from the Companions of Muḥammad and their elders reach them. If however, knowledge comes to them by way of their young and their desires diversify, they will be ruined".*[104]

2. He also said: *"Whoever amongst you seeks to adopt a path, should take to the way of the dead, since the living are not safe and secure from being put to trial. They, the Companions of Muḥammad (ﷺ), possessed the most pious hearts of this ummah, were the most profound in knowledge and the least constraint of this ummah. A people whom Allāh chose for the companionship of His Prophet (ﷺ) and the establishment of His religion. So know their rights and adhere to their guidance, for they indeed were upon the straight way".*[105]

3. He also said: *"We emulate and do not set precedents, we follow and do not innovate, and we will not deviate as long as we hold on to the narrations".*[106]

4. He also said: *"Follow and do not innovate, for indeed you have been sufficed".*[107]

5. Hudhayfah Ibn al-Yamān, may Allāh be pleased with him, said: *"O assembly of reciters! Remain upright and take to the way of those before you. For by Allāh, if you (choose to) follow them then know that you have been outstripped by a long distance, and if you take to the right or left (of their path) then you will be upon severe deviation."*[108]

6. Mujāhid said: *"The scholars are the Companions of Muḥammad (ﷺ)".*

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[104] *Al-Zuhd* of Ibn al-Mubārak, p. 281 narration number 815.

[105] *Jāmi' Bayān al-'Ilm wa Faḍlih*, 2/97.

[106] *Sharḥ Uṣūl 'Itiqād Ahl al-Sunnah* of al-Lālakā'i, narration number 115.

[107] *Al-Bida' wa al-Nahy 'anhā* of Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, pg. 13.

[108] This and the following two narrations are in *Jāmi' Bayān al-'Ilm*, 2/29.

7. Al-Awzā'ī said: *"Knowledge is that which emanates from the Companions of Muḥammad, as for anything else besides this, it is not knowledge"*. Imām Aḥmad, may Allāh have mercy upon him, also said this.

8. Al-Awzā'ī also said: *"Patiently restrict yourself upon the Sunnah, stop where the people (i.e. the Companions) stopped, say what they say and refrain from that which they refrained. Traverse upon the path of your Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ, for indeed what was sufficient for them is sufficient for you".*[109]

9. Al-Hasan al-Baṣrī was in a gathering when he mentioned the Companions of Muḥammad (ﷺ). He then remarked: *"They possessed the most pious hearts of this ummah, were the most profound in knowledge and the least constraint. A people, whom Allāh chose for the companionship of His Prophet (ﷺ), so emulate their character and way, for by the Lord of the Ka'bah, they are upon the straight path".*[110]

10. Abū Hanīfah, may Allāh have mercy upon him, was questioned: *"What is your comment on the speech innovated by the people regarding al-A'rād and al-Ajsām?" He replied: "Statements of the philosophers! Take to the narrations and the way of the Salaf and beware of every newly-invented matter for it is indeed an innovation".*[111]

11. Al-Awzā'ī said: *"Hold fast to the narrations of the Salaf, even if people abandon you. Beware of the opinions of men, no matter how much they beautify it with their speech, for indeed the matter will become manifest whilst you will be upon the correct straight path concerning it".*[112]

12. Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah said: *"It is a must upon every Muslim, who testifies that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh, that his basic intention be to single out Allāh in his worship of Him alone, without any partner and to obey His Messenger.*

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[109] *Al-Sharī'ah* of al-Ājurrī, pg. 58.

[110] *Jāmi' Bayān al-'Ilm*, 2/97.

[111] *Ṣawn al-Manṭiq* of al-Suyūṭī, 322.

[112] *Al-Madkhal ilā al-Sunan* of al-Bayhaqī, number 233.

He is to remain upon this, following it wherever he finds it, and he should know that the best of creation after the Prophets are the Companions.

He should not therefore, offer absolute and unrestricted allegiance to any one person except the Messenger of Allāh. Nor should he offer absolute and unrestricted allegiance to any one group except the Companions; as the Guidance remains with the Messenger, wherever he remains, and it remains with his Companions and no one else's companions, wherever they remain.

If they are in agreement, they never ever agree upon something incorrect, in contrast to the companions of a particular scholar, as they could agree upon something incorrect. In fact, everything that they (i.e. companions of a particular scholar) have asserted to which none other from amongst this ummah has asserted, can be nothing but incorrect, since the religion that Allāh has sent His Messenger with is not conferred to any single scholar and his companions. If this was so, that person would be an equal to the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and this is similar to the belief of the Rāfiḍah regarding the 'Infallible Imām'.

Moreover, it is a must that the Companions and their successors were aware of that truth with which Allāh had sent His Messenger, well before the presence of those who are followed; those whom the madhhabs (i.e. schools of thought) are attributed to, in relation to both fundamental and subsidiary matters.

It is impossible for them to bring about a truth, which opposes what the Messenger brought, as everything that opposes the Messenger is falsehood. It is also impossible for them to know of something emanating from the Messenger which opposes (the knowledge and understanding of) the Companions and their successors in righteousness, as they (i.e. the Companions) did not unite upon any deviation. So his (i.e. a followed imām's) saying, if true, has to be taken from that which the Messenger brought and present with someone before him.

Every statement in the religion of Islām which lies in opposition to that which the Companions and their successors in righteousness were upon,

which none of them have asserted, but rather have said other than it, it is indeed a false saying."[113]

Definition of *Ahl al-Sunnah*

The Scholars at times use the title '*Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah*' instead of the term *al-Salaf*.

This term has two connotations in the usage of the scholars:

1. The more specific meaning:

This is synonymous to the meaning of the term *al-Salaf*. *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah* are therefore the Companions, the Successors, their subsequent successors and the scholars of guidance who follow their way and traverse their path as well as all those who follow them from amongst the rest of the *ummah*.

This meaning therefore expels all the sects of innovation and people of desires.

Sunnah is employed here in opposition to innovation (*bid'ah*) and *al-Jamā'ah* (assembly) is employed here in opposition to separation (*furqah*).

Ibn 'Abbās, may Allāh be pleased with him, commentated on the *āyah*:

يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ

> **"On the day when some faces will become white and some faces will become black..."**[114]

He said: *"The faces of Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah will become white and the faces of Ahl al-Bid'ah wa l-Furqah will become black"*.[115]

This particular connotation is the meaning that is intended in the *aḥādīth* which pertain to adhering to the *Jamā'ah* and to the prohibition of splitting.

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[113] *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, 5/262-263.

[114] Sūrah Āl-'Imrān (3):106

[115] *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* 1/390.

Although this connotation is more specific in meaning, it is however the most common one found and used in the statements of the scholars.

2. The more general meaning:

This connotation includes within it some of the innovated sects when and where their position on a specific issue lies in agreement with the position of the *Salaf,* which is at variance to a specific group.

This connotation has been used to a lesser degree because of its stipulation to the following specific conditions:

1. It is in regard to particular issues pertaining to belief.
2. It is used in opposition to certain distinct groups.

An example of this usage is the application of this term in opposition to the *Rāfiḍah* on the issues of the *Khilāfah* and the Companions[116].

One therefore says in this context that those who attribute themselves to Islām are two groups:

1- *Ahl al-Sunnah* and

2- The *Rāfiḍah*.

Some of the groups of innovation such as the *Ashā'irah* and others enter into the term *Ahl al-Sunnah* by reason of their agreement with the position of the *Salaf* on these two issues of *Khilāfah* and the Companions, when the difference and dispute occurred between the *Salaf* and the *Rāfiḍah*.

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[116] i.e. regarding the honour, veneration and great position the Companions hold, that they are the best of creation after the Prophets and Messengers and are to be emulated in this *dīn* of ours; the belief that they held these virtues and remained upon such righteousness during the Prophet's life as well as after his demise until their own passing away; likewise, the acceptance of the validity of the *khilāfah* of the first three and greatest companions, Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, may Allāh be pleased with them all. [t]

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah said: "What is meant by the term *Ahl al-Sunnah* is:

1. Those who affirm the *Khilāfah* of the three *khalīfahs;* this includes all the groups other than the *Rāfiḍah.*

2. It may also be used to mean *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* and Sunnah in its purest sense. So none enters into this understanding except those who affirm the Attributes for Allāh the Most High; who say that the *Qur'ān* is not created; that Allāh will be seen in the Hereafter and who affirm *Qadar,* as well as the rest of the well known fundamentals held by the people of Ḥadīth and Sunnah".[117]

Shaykh al-Islām termed these two categories by naming the first as [أَهْلُ السُّنَّةِ العَامَّةِ], the people of the general Sunnah, and this label is in reference to everyone who is not a *Rāfiḍī.*[118]

The second category is [أَهْلُ السُّنَّةِ الخَاصَّةِ], the people of the specific Sunnah, i.e. *Ahl-Ḥadīth*[119].

An Explanation of the Belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* in the Names and Attributes of Allāh

The belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* regarding the Names and Attributes of Allāh is one of belief in all that has been mentioned in the Qur'ān and

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[117] *Minhāj al-Sunnah* 2/221, University of Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sa'ūd print.

[118] Shaykh al-Islām says: "There is no doubt that they (i.e. the *Rāfiḍah*) are the most distant of the groups of innovators from the Book and Sunnah. This is why they became the well known, among the general populace, for opposing the Sunnah. As such, the general masses of the *ummah* do not know of anyone who is opposed to the Sunnī other than the *Rāfiḍī* (i.e. Shi'ah). When one of them asserts, '*I am a* Sunnī' then he means by this '*I am not a Rāfiḍī*' (i.e. not of the Shī'ah)." *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 3/356.

[119] This term '*Ahl-Ḥadīth*' (people of ḥadīth) itself carries different connotations. At times it is used to represent *Ahl al-Sunnah* in contrast to *Ahl al-Kalām* and people of innovation and this is the meaning intended above. At other times it is used to mean those specifically connected to the science of Ḥadīth. [t]

the authentic Sunnah by way of affirming and negating where appropriate. As a result, they:

1. Name Allāh with the Names that He has Named Himself with; they do not add to nor omit from any of these Names.
2. Affirm and describe Allāh (*'azza wa jalla*) with what He has described Himself with in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger (ﷺ), without committing any *taḥrīf* or *ta'ṭīl*, nor any *takyīf* or *tamthīl*.
3. Negate for Allāh that which He Himself has negated from Himself in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger Muḥammad (ﷺ) with the belief that Allāh is depicted with the opposite of that negated matter in its perfect sense[120].

Ahl al-Sunnah have therefore traversed upon the methodology of the Qur'ān and the authentic Sunnah in this respect; every name or attribute of Allāh (*subḥānahu*) mentioned in the Book or authentic Sunnah is from the area of affirmation, so by this it is obligatory to affirm them. As for the issue of negation, it means to negate all the various types of defects and deficiencies that oppose His perfection, with the mandatory belief that the opposite of that negated matter is affirmed in its perfect sense.

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[120] i.e. when Allāh for example, in His Book, negates oppression from Himself, this is because He is characterised with absolute and perfect Justice. The reason why negation of a quality must entail the affirmation of the quality that is opposite to it when it concerns our Lord (*ta'āla*), is that mere negation is not praise in itself. In the previous example regarding oppression for instance, a person can be characterised with not being oppressive but not because he is just and fair but instead because he is the weakest of the weak, who has no ability or power to oppress anyone even if he desired to do so, he himself may in fact be the oppressed! So the negation of oppression concerning such a person is not praise of him. This is not the case regarding our Lord however, for He is the all-Powerful Who does as He chooses, but does not and never oppresses because of His perfect and absolute Justice. Contemplate over this principle and understand it as it will give you one example of many, of how to truly glorify Allāh in the manner of our *Salaf*. Such glorification, can only transpire when one correctly understands the principles they adhered to, which are none other than what this *Dīn* has brought. [t]

Imām Ahmad, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said: *"Allāh is not to be described except with what He Himself and His Messenger have described Him with; we do not exceed the boundaries of the Qur'ān and Sunnah."*

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah said: "...and the way of the *Salaf* of this *ummah* and its *Imāms* is that they describe Allāh with that which He Himself and His Messenger have described Him with: without any *taḥrīf* or *ta'ṭīl* and without any *takyīf* nor *tamthīl*. Affirmation without any *tamthīl* (similitude), elevation and exaltation without any *ta'ṭīl* (invalidation); affirming the Attributes and negating any resemblance to creation. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says,

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَيْءٌ

'...There is nothing like Him...'

This is a refutation of the *mumaththilah*[121]

وَهُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْبَصِيرُ

'...and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.'[122]

This is a refutation of the *Mu'aṭṭilah*[123].

So their declaration concerning the Attributes is built upon two fundamentals:

The first, that Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) is absolutely Exalted and Elevated above characteristics of imperfections such as slumber, sleep, incapability, ignorance and so on.

The second, that He is characterised with Attributes of perfection, which do not entail any imperfections in the unique manner in which He possesses, these Attributes, so nothing of His creation is similar to any of his Attributes.

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[121] Plural of *mumaththil*: doer of *tamthīl*. [t]

[122] Sūrah al-Shūrā (42):11.

[123] Plural of *mu'aṭṭil*: doer of *ta'ṭīl*. [t]

The following are some of the texts that clarify this:

1. His (*ta'āla*) saying:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَىْءٌ ۖ وَهُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

"There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer."[124]

'...*There is nothing like Him*...' is with respect to negation. '...*and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.*' is with respect to affirmation.

2. His saying, the Most High:

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى ٱلْحَىِّ ٱلَّذِى لَا يَمُوتُ

"And put your trust in the Ever Living One Who dies not..."[125]

'*And put your trust in the Ever Living One*...' is with respect to affirmation. '...*Who dies not*...' is with respect to negation.

3. His Saying, the Most High:

ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ٱلْحَىُّ ٱلْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُۥ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ

"Allāh, none has the right to be worshipped but He, The Ever Living, The Self Sustainer and Supporter of All. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him..."[126]

'*Allāh*...' and '...*The Ever Living, The Self-Sustainer and Supporter of all*...' is with respect to affirmation. '...*None has the right to be worshipped but He*...' and '...*Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him*...' is with respect to negation.

As for texts from the *Sunnah*:

With regard to affirmation, there are the (following) statements of the Prophet (ﷺ): *"Our Lord, ('azza wa jalla), descends to the lowest heaven when the last third of the night remains."*[127] and *"When Allāh created the*

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[124] Sūrah al-Shūrā (42):11.

[125] Sūrah al-Furqān (25):58.

[126] Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):255.

[127] Al-Bukhārī, 3/229 and Muslim, 1/521 ḥadīth number 168.

creation, He wrote in a Book, which is with Him above His Throne, that His Mercy overcomes His Anger." [128]

With regard to negation, the Prophet (ﷺ) has said: *"Lower your voices, for you are not invoking a deaf nor absent one!"*[129] He (ﷺ) also said: *"Indeed, Allāh is not one-eyed."* [130] and he (ﷺ) said: *"Allāh does not sleep, and it is not befitting to Him that He sleep."*[131]

Explanation of the declaration of *Ahl al-Sunnah* '...without any *taḥrīf* nor *ta'ṭīl* and without any *takyīf* nor *tamthīl*'

Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt is fundamentally opposed by the following two matters:

1. *Al-Ta'ṭīl*
2. *Al-Tashbīh* and *al-Tamthīl*

Whoever negates the Attributes of the Lord and renders them void has in effect made his *tawḥīd* (of Allāh) untrue by virtue of his act of *ta'ṭīl* (nullification of these Attributes).

Whoever likens Allāh to His creation or declares Him to be something of His creation has likewise made his *tawḥīd* (of Allāh) untrue by virtue of his act of *tashbīh* and *tamthīl* (likening).[132]

The meaning of '...without any taḥrīf nor ta'ṭīl...'

This expression distinguishes the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* from the belief of the people of *ta'ṭīl*.

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[128] Al-Bukhārī, 6/287 ḥadīth number 194 and Muslim, 4/2107 ḥadīth number 14.

[129] Al-Bukhārī 13/372 ḥadīth number 7386.

[130] Agreed upon. Al-Bukhārī, 13/90 and Muslim 18/59.

[131] Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1/111.

[132] *Ijtimā' al-Juyūsh al-Islāmiyyah*, p. 36.

- **The meaning of *taḥrīf* and its types**

(i) the meaning of *taḥrīf*:

Taḥrīf linguistically means change, substitution, inclination and divergence.

Its legal meaning: to turn the texts away from that which they are actually upon, either by directly contesting them or by removing them from the realities which they point to whilst acknowledging the existence of the wording itself.

One could also say as a concise definition: to turn the text away from its indication and correctness to something besides it.[133]

Taḥrīf in the area of *Tawḥīd al-Asmā wa l-Ṣifāt* means to change the actual wordings of the texts related to the Names and Attributes or their meanings away from the meaning intended by Allāh.

(ii) types of *taḥrīf*:

Taḥrīf is of two types:

The first type: *taḥrīf* of the actual wording (*lafẓ*)

Its definition is to remove the actual word away from its proper place. This can be manifested in four different ways:

1. Adding to the word
2. Omitting from the word
3. Changing a vowel that is related to *'Irāb*[134].
4. Changing a vowel that is not related to *'Irāb*.

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[133] *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Mursalah*, 1/215.

[134] The study of the case and change of the ends of words that result from operators acting on them. One of the common representations of this change is in the vowel of the last letter of a word. [t]

Examples of *taḥrīf al-Lafẓ*:

The first example is changing the *'Irāb* of His (*ta'āla*) saying:

وَكَلَّمَ ٱللَّهُ مُوسَىٰ تَكْلِيمًا ﴿١٦٤﴾

"And Allāh spoke directly to Mūsa"[135]

The change is made from the accusative case to the subjective so that it instead reads [وكلم اللهَ] i.e. Mūsa spoke to Allāh and Allāh did not speak to him.[136]

When some of the *Jahmiyyah* committed this *taḥrīf* some of the people of *tawḥīd* replied: "What will you do with His saying:

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ مُوسَىٰ لِمِيقَـٰتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُۥ رَبُّهُۥ

"And when Mūsa came at the time and place appointed by Us, and his Lord spoke to him..."[137]

Upon that the perpetrator of *taḥrīf* was utterly defeated and left dumbfounded.[138]

Another example is that some of the *Mu'aṭṭilah* asked certain scholars of the Arabic language as to whether it was possible to read the word [الْعَرْشُ] in the accusative case[139] with respect to the *āyah*:

ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنُ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ٱسْتَوَىٰ ﴿٥﴾

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[135] Sūrah al-Nisā' (4):164.

[136] i.e. the vowel on the end of the word [اللهُ] is changed from a *dammah* [ُ] to a *fatḥah* [َ]. This will change the meaning to *'And Mūsa spoke directly to Allāh'*. The benefit derived from this, for the denier of Attributes, is that the *āyah* will no longer contain the attribution of speech to Allāh. [t]

[137] Sūrah al-A'rāf (7):143.

[138] By reason of the construction of this *āyah*, as it is impossible to manipulate it in the manner done with the former *āyah*. [t]

[139] i.e. by changing the vowel at the end of the word [الْعَرْشِ] from a *kasrah* [ِ] to a *dammah* [ُ] the *āyah* would then read *'The Most Beneficent is above the Throne which ascended'*. [t]

"The Most Beneficent ascended above the Throne"[140]

The intention behind this *taḥrīf* was to make the ascension an attribute of the creation (i.e. the Throne) rather than that of the Creator.[141]

The second type: *taḥrīf* of the meaning

Its definition is to change the meaning of the wording from its correct one to another whilst keeping the appearance of the actual wording.[142]

The definition could also be: to turn away the meaning from its indication and reality and to give the wording a meaning of another word to a level they both share.

This is the type of *taḥrīf* which the people of *Kalām* such as the *Mu'aṭṭilah* delved into, expanded upon and named *ta'wīl* (interpretation). This is in fact a false and innovated use of terminology, which the Arabic language has no previous familiarity with.

The following are examples of *taḥrīf* of meaning:

The explanation of the *Mu'aṭṭilah* that [إِسْتَوَى] ascension, means [إِسْتَوْلَى] *'to seize/conquer'* in His (*ta'āla*) saying:

ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ٱسْتَوَىٰ ۝٥

"The Most Beneficent ascended above the Throne"[143]

The meaning of [يَد] hand, to mean *blessing* and *power* in the His (*ta'āla*) saying:

بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ

"...Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched..."[144]

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[140] Sūrah Ṭāhā (20):5.

[141] *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Mursalah*, 1/218.

[142] *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Munazzalah*, 1/201.

[143] Sūrah Ṭāhā (20):5.

[144] Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5):64.

The interpretation of His (*ta'āla*) saying:

وَجَآءَ رَبُّكَ

"And your Lord will come..."[145]

to mean 'And the *command* of your Lord will come...'

Allāh has mentioned this *taḥrīf* and censured it when He did.

The issue of *taḥrīf* is taken originally from the Jews, as they are well grounded and most proficient in this. They are in fact the leaders and predecessors of those who commit *taḥrīf*. They changed and distorted many of the texts within the Tawrāh. As for those of the texts that proved too difficult to change, they changed their meanings. As such, Allāh specifically associated them and no other nation with the issue of *taḥrīf*.[146]

The *Rāfiḍah* have proceeded along their lines; indeed, they are deceptively alike.

Likewise the *Jahmiyyah*, for they adopted the same methods as their Jewish brothers concerning *taḥrīf* of the texts.

From a given perspective those who committed *taḥrīf* in the actual wordings are worse than those who committed *taḥrīf* in the meanings, and yet from another perspective, those who committed *taḥrīf* in the meanings are worse than those who committed *taḥrīf* in the wordings.

Those who committed *taḥrīf* of wording changed both the wording and meaning of a text from its original state, so they corrupted both the wording and meaning. Whereas those who committed *taḥrīf* in

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[145] Sūrah al-Fajr (89):22.

[146] Allāh has mentioned this fact in many places, such as:

> **"Do you covet that they will believe in your religion when a party of them (Jewish rabbis) used to hear the word of Allāh (the Tawrāt), then they used to change it knowingly after they had understood it?"** Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):75

> **"Amongst the Jews are some who displace words from their right places..."** Sūrah al-Nisā' (4):46 [t]

the meaning corrupted the meaning alone and left the wording in its original state; from this perspective the latter are better off.

Hence, when the former were seeking out a false meaning, they changed the actual wording into one that was suitable, so that the wording and meaning desired would not clash. Consequently, when this distorted wording was used, the distorted meaning would be understood. They felt that to change the meaning from its true indication and reality whilst keeping the same wording was not possible at all, so they took to changing the wording in order for their ruling on their desired meaning to stand correct.

As for the angle which shows how the perpetrators of *taḥrīf* in the meanings are worse than those who perpetrated *taḥrīf* in the wordings, it is the fact that this particular type is the most common one found and used, as it is easier to promote and propound amongst the ignorant and common folk. One who does not sufficiently possess the correct knowledge based on the Book, Sunnah and understanding of the *Salaf* of this *ummah* is therefore put to trial with such misrepresentations and falsifications.

- **The meaning of *ta'ṭīl***

The word *ta'ṭīl* [التَّعْطِيل] is lexically derived from the word *al-'Uṭl* [العُطْل] which means to be destitute, devoid and neglected. An example of the lexical use of this word is found in the *āyah* where Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

وَبِئْرٍ مُّعَطَّلَةٍ

"...a (*mu'aṭṭalah*) deserted well..."[147]

i.e. the owners of this well neglected it and ceased to draw water from it.

Ta'ṭīl with regard to Allāh is of three categories[148]:

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[147] Sūrah al-Ḥajj (22):45.

[148] These categories directly oppose the three categories of *tawḥīd*. [t]

The first, *ta' ṭīl* of the creation from it's Fashioner and Creator. This type of *ta' ṭīl* is found amongst those who deny the existence of the Creator of this universe, it is the belief of the heretical atheists.

The second, *ta' ṭīl* of the worship of Allāh (*'azza wa jalla*), which means to render void the reality of *tawḥīd* and worship of Allāh alone, which His servants are obliged to assign to Him. This type is found amongst the people of *shirk*, who direct certain acts of worship to other than Allāh, the Mighty and Exalted.

The third is *ta' ṭīl* of Allāh (*subḥānahu*) from His Exalted Perfection by declaring void His Names, Attributes and Actions.[149] This third type is the one which we intend here (in our discussion).

The meaning therefore of *ta' ṭīl* in the area of the Names and Attributes is to negate some or all of the Names and Attributes and to strip Allāh of them. Or one could say it means to negate the divine Attributes and to deny their existence as qualities of the essence of Allāh (*ta' āla*).[150]

A number of groups have committed *taḥrīf* and *ta' ṭīl*, the scholars have classified them under the single label *al-Mu' aṭṭilah* [المُعَطِّلَة][151]

The *Mu' aṭṭilah* comprise of two main groupings:

The first are the Philosophers [الفَلاَسِفَة]; they are of two types:

1. The pure philosophers
2. The heretical philosophers.

This second type has within it two groups: the *Rāfiḍah* and the *Sūfiyyah*.

The second main grouping are *Ahl al-Kalām* [أَهْلُ الكَلاَم]; they are made up of five groups:

1. The *Jahmiyyah*,

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[149] *Al-Jawāb al-Kāfī li man Sa'ala 'an al-Dawā al-Shāfī*, p. 153.

[150] *Sharḥ al-Wāsiṭiyyah*, p. 20.

[151] Plural of the word *mu' aṭṭil* [مُعَطِّل] which is the noun for the doer of *ta' ṭīl*. [t]

2. The *Mu'tazilah,*

3. The *Kullābiyyah,*

4. The *Ashā'irah,*

5. The *Māturīdiyyah*.

I will discuss these groups in detail in a separate study, by the will of Allāh.

THE MEANING OF '...WITHOUT ANY TAKYĪF NOR TAMTHĪL'

This expression distinguishes the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* from the belief of the *Mushabbihah* (people of *tashbīh*).

- **The meaning of *takyīf*[152]**

The definition of *takyīf* is: to declare something to be upon a particular reality without having to specify the resemblance.[153]

An example of this is the assertion[154] of the *Hishāmiyyah* regarding Allāh: "His length is equal to His width"[155] or their declaration: "His length is equivalent to seven times the span of Himself."

[152] Sub-heading added by the translator. [t]

[153] *Al-Qawā'id al-Muthlā*, page 27.

[154] *Maqālat al-Islāmiyyīn*, page 31.

[155] This example relates back to the definition due to this statement entailing within it a declaration that 'His length' is upon a particular reality as it has been compared to something, i.e. 'His width'. The fact that it has been compared to something of which it's own reality is not known itself, is the meaning of 'without having to specify the resemblance'.
An important point to note here is that the use of the terms 'His length' and 'His width' is restricted here to manifest and make clear the issue of *takyīf* on the basis that it a statement found within this sect. Mention of these two attributes 'length' and 'width' are not found within the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* with regards to affirmation or negation as it goes against the rules laid out and mentioned earlier concerning speaking about Allāh only with textual proofs. As there is no mention of these two attributes within the Qur'ān and Sunnah it is an enormous offence and innovation to affirm or negate them. The position of *Ahl al-Sunnah* on such matters is to keep quiet about that which Allāh and His Messenger have kept quiet about. [t]

In light of this definition there exists a difference between *takyīf* and *tamthīl*:

Takyīf does not entail a restriction to a (known) resemblance, whereas *tamthīl* is the belief that a particular Attribute resembles attributes found within the creation.

It therefore seems correct to say that *takyīf* is more general than *tamthīl*, so every statement of *tamthīl* is in fact a statement of *takyīf*. This is borne by the fact that one who declares a resemblance between the Attributes of the Creator to that of creation has in fact assigned to a particular Attribute a specific and seen reality. However, not every statement of *takyīf* is a statement of *tamthīl* because some types of *takyīf* do not contain any resemblance to attributes of creation as in the statement 'His length is equal to His width'.

The meaning of the statement of *Ahl al-Sunnah 'without any takyīf'* is without any *takyīf* that man can grasp. The meaning is not that *Ahl al-Sunnah* negate any qualitative designation outright, as every thing in existence must be upon a certain reality. The meaning behind this statement is that they negate any **knowledge** of this true nature since none knows the reality of His Essence and Attributes except Himself (*subḥānahu*).[156]

It is very clear that we do not possess any knowledge with respect to the reality of His Attributes (*'azza wa jalla*) because He (*ta'āla*) informed us of these Attributes but did not inform us of their reality. The delving into and attachment to the issue of their true nature on our part, will therefore be chasing after that which we have no knowledge of and an assertion on a matter which is impossible for us to comprehend.

The scholars have traversed upon a set principle in this domain which they took from the statement of Imām Mālik: "Al-Istiwā (ascension) is

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[156] *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Wāsiṭiyyah*, page 21.

well known, the reality/qualitative designation is not known, possessing *īmān* in it is compulsory and to ask about it is an innovation".[157]

- **The meaning of *tamthīl*[158]**

"...nor tamthīl".

Al-Mathīl [المَثِيْل] lexically means an equal and rival, and the definition of *at-Tamthīl* [التَمْثِيْل] is: the belief that the Attributes of the Creator are like the attributes of creation.

This is manifested in the statement of the *mumaththil*[159] when he says for example: "He has a Hand like my hand and Hearing like my hearing". Most Exalted and Elevated is Allāh above their statement!

Tamthīl and *tashbīh* connote the same meaning in this context, even though there is a difference between them lexically[160].[161]

Al-Mumāthalah [المُمَاثَلَة] is the equalisation of something to another from every single aspect.

Al-Mushābahah [المُشَابَهَة] is the equalisation of something to another from most aspects.

To use the expression of negating *tamthīl* is more appropriate as it agrees with the text of the Qur'ān where Allāh says:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَىْءٌ

"There is nothing (*mithlih*) like Him..."[162]

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[157] A complete discussion on this statement will feature further on in this book. [t]

[158] Sub-heading added by the translator. [t]

[159] [مُمَثِّل]: doer of *tamthīl*. [t]

[160] *Al-Qawā'id al-Muthlā*, page 27.

[161] Also note that these two words and their derivatives are being used interchangeably throughout this discussion. [t]

[162] Sūrah al-Shūrā (42):11

فَلَا تَضْرِبُوا لِلَّهِ ٱلْأَمْثَالَ

"So do not set forth (*al-Amthāl*) parables for Allāh"[163]

Those who have committed *tamthīl* and *takyīf* are the *Mushabbihah*[164] [المشبهة] who exceeded the limits with regard to the affirmation of the Attributes to the level of comparing the Creator to creation.

The following groups committed *tamthīl*:

1. *Al-Kurrāmiyyah*

They are the followers of Muḥammad Ibn Kurrām al-Sijistānī. They are many groups totalling in all twelve, the main groups are six:

1. Al-ʿĀbidiyyah,

2. Al-Nūniyyah,

3. Al-Zarīniyyah,

4. Al-Ishāqiyyah,

5. Al-Wāhidiyyah,

6. Al-Haysīmiyyah.

2. *Al-Hishāmiyyah al-Rāfiḍah al-Imāmiyyah*

They are the followers of Hishām Ibn al-Ḥakam al-Rāfiḍī, and at times they are attributed to Hishām Ibn Sālim al-Jawālīqī. Both of these two individuals are from the *Imāmiyyah Al-Mushabbihah*.

Worthy of mention here is that *tamthīl* was rampant within the *Rāfiḍah al-Imāmiyyah* of old whereas nowadays they are upon the belief of the *Muʿtazilah* with regard to the issues connected to the Attributes. This is also the case of the *Zaydiyyah* in Yemen.

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[163] Sūrah al-Naḥl (16):74.

[164] A collective term representing the groups about to be mentioned. It is the plural of *mushabbih,* which is the noun representing the doer of *tashbīh*. [t]

EVERY MUʿAṬṬIL IS A MUMATHTHIL AND EVERY MUMATHTHIL IS A MUʿAṬṬIL

These two groups of *taʿṭīl* and *tamthīl* individually commit both *taʿṭīl* and *tamthīl*.

- **Explanation of how the *Muʿaṭṭilah* commit both *taʿṭīl* and *tamthīl***

As for their action of *tamthīl*, it is because of the fact that what they understood of the Names and Attributes of Allāh was that which was befitting for His creation. Thereafter, they proceeded to negate those concepts.

This is an action of *tashbīh* and *tamthīl* on their part, reflecting the understanding they held of His Names and Attributes, which they likened to the understanding of the Names and Attributes of His creation.

As for their action of *taʿṭīl*, it is because of the negation on their part of the Names and Attributes which Allāh deserves and are befitting to Him.

Thus, they carried out both *taʿṭīl* and tamthīl; they started off by declaring a resemblance and concluded by negating and rendering them void.

The people of *taʿṭīl* distinguish themselves from the people of *tamthīl* by virtue of their negation of the correct meanings of the Attributes.[165]

An example of this combination of *taʿṭīl* and *tamthīl* by the *Muʿaṭṭilah* is with regard to the texts on ascension *(al-Istiwā)* like:

ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ٱسْتَوَىٰ ﴿٥﴾

"The Most Beneficent ascended above the Throne"[166]

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[165] In the sense that the people of *tamthīl* understood that these Attributes are real Attributes of Allāh - even though they went to the extreme of declaring them to be like the attributes of creation - whereas the people of *taʿṭīl* rejected that the meanings found in these texts signify real Attributes for Allāh. [t]

[166] Sūrah Ṭāhā (20):5

The *mu'attil* says: *'If Allāh were above the Throne, this would necessitate that He is either bigger than the Throne, smaller than it, or of similar size, and all of this is impossible.'* and other similar assertions.

This *mu'attil* therefore did not conceive of Allāh being above the Throne except that which he affirms for any body over another body (from creation). This necessity (which he has asserted) arose as a result of this concept.[167]

It was instead imperative of him to affirm for Allāh an ascension that is becoming of His Majesty and specific for Him, whereby none of the inseparable requisites of the attributes of creation are falsely made binding upon Him; the negation of such with respect to Allāh is mandatory.

The people of *ta'ṭīl* have committed four transgressions:

1. The fact that they likened that which they understood from the texts to the attributes of creation, and believed that the texts signify *tamthīl*.
2. They rendered void the indications of the texts, such indications that contain the affirmation of Attributes befitting to Allāh.
3. By virtue of their negation of the Attributes they became negators of the Attributes of perfection that Allāh truly deserves.
4. They depicted the Lord with the opposite of those Attributes; attributes of the non-living, inanimate and non-existent.[168]

• Explanation of how the *Mushabbihah* commit both *ta'ṭīl* and *tamthīl*[169]

As for the *ta'ṭīl* of the *mumaththil*, this occurs from three different angles:

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[167] i.e. that the ascension of Allāh is the same as the ascension of His creation, this is his act of *tamthīl* and the first step before he then continues his thought process, which ends in negating the ascension. [t]

[168] *Al-Risālah al-TadmtB yyah*, p. 79-80.

[169] Refer to *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyyah*, pp. 62-63. *Dār Fajr li al-Turāth* publication.

1. He invalidated the very text that affirms the Attribute when he changed it from that which it really points to; i.e. the affirmation of an Attribute befitting Allāh, to misinterpreting as Allaah's resemblance to His creation.

2. When he likens Allāh to His creation, he negates from Allāh His fitting perfection by virtue of comparing the perfect Lord with the imperfect creation.

3. When he likens Allāh to His creation, he in fact renders void every text that expresses that nothing of His creation is like Him, such as the *āyāt*:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَىْءٌۖ وَهُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

"...There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer."[170]

وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌۢ

"And there is no co-equal or comparable unto Him."[171]

As for their act of *tamthīl*, they allege that Allāh (*ʿazza wa jalla*) only addresses us with that which we are able to comprehend. Therefore, if He has ascended above the Throne, this is the same as a person ascended above an elevated seat, as no other type of ascension is otherwise known of.

These *Mumaththilah* distinguished themselves by affirming a type of ascension that is from the characteristics of the creation just as the *Muʿaṭṭilah* distinguished themselves by negating every name for the true ascension.

The decisive position is that which the middle and balanced of this *ummah* is upon: Allāh ascended above His Throne in a manner fitting to His majesty and specific to Himself.

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[170] Sūrah al-Shūrā (42):11.

[171] Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ (112):4.

So, just as He is described as being fully aware of everything, being Omnipotent and that He is the Hearer and Seer of all things etc. and it is impermissible to affirm for this Knowledge and Omnipotence, characteristics particular to the knowledge and capability of creation, then likewise, He (*subḥānahu*) is above the Throne and the specific characteristics and requisites that are connected to any of His creation being above something, is not affirmed for Allāh.

Allāh indeed guided those upon the straight path towards the exemplary way. They affirmed for Allāh the reality of the Names and Attributes and negated from Him any resemblance to His creation. Their position was therefore a middle one and one of guidance between two deviations.

They asserted, 'We describe Allāh with that which He Himself and His Messenger (ﷺ) have described Him, without any *taḥrīf* or *ta'ṭīl* and any *tamthīl* or *takyīf*.

Rather, our way is to affirm the reality of the Names and Attributes, and to negate any resemblance to creation; we do not commit *ta'ṭīl*, *ta'wīl*, *tamthīl* or plead ignorant.

We do not say, 'He does not have two Hands, a Face, Hearing, Sight, Life, Capability, and nor did He ascend above His Throne'.

Nor do we say, 'He has two Hands like that of His creation, a Face like theirs and He has Hearing, Sight, Life, Capability and Ascension like their hearing, sight, life, capability and ascension.'

Rather, we say, 'He has a real Essence that is not like the essences of His creation, and He has real Attributes that are not like the attributes of His creation.'

In like manner, is our belief regarding His Face (*tabāraka wa ta'āla*), two Hands, Hearing, Sight, Speech and Ascension.

This belief does not prevent us from understanding the meaning of those Attributes and the reality (of their existence). It also does not prevent the one who affirms for Allāh an Attribute of perfection to

understand the meaning of the attribute and to actualise it[172]. As the one who affirms for Allāh (*subḥānahu*) Hearing and Sight, affirms their reality and existence and understands their meaning, likewise, is the case for the rest of the sacred Attributes; they must be held in this same manner. Even though, there is no way for us to *know* their true reality and nature, since Allāh (*subḥānahu*) did not entrust the servants with that, He did not desire that from them nor did he grant them a route towards that.[173]

The Foundations on which the Belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* in the Names and Attributes of Allāh is Based

The belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* in the domain of Allāh's Names and Attributes centres on three main foundations[174]:

The first foundation: to possess *īmān* in all the Names and Attributes that have been mentioned in the Qur'ān and the authentic Sunnah by way of affirming and negating where appropriate.

The second foundation: to exalt and elevate Allāh (*jalla wa ʿalā*) over and above the matter of any of His Attributes ever resembling attributes of His creation.

The third foundation: to relinquish all hope of comprehending *how* Allāh is actually characterised with those Attributes.

These three foundations distinguish and separate the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* in this domain from the people of *taʿṭīl* -such as the philosophers and *Ahl al-Kalām*- at one end and from the belief of the people of *tamthīl* - such as the *Kurramiyyah* and *Hishāmiyyah* - at the other.

The first foundation has within it a distinguishing factor that sets apart the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* from the belief of the *Muʿaṭṭilah*. *Ahl al-*

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[172] i.e. for one's heart and limbs to become affected by the Attribute through love, fear, hope, etc. [t]

[173] *Al-Ṣawāʿiq al-Mursalah*, 2/425-426.

[174] *Manhaj wa Dirāsāt Li āyāt al-Asmā wa al-Ṣifāt*, p. 25.

Sunnah designate the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of His Messenger (ﷺ) as the basis for affirming or negating Names and Attributes for Allāh (*ta'āla*). They do not exceed these two confines. So, with regard to the Names and Attributes which have been mentioned by way of affirmation, it is mandatory to affirm them, and whatever has been mentioned by way of negation, it is mandatory to negate them.

"As for a matter that has not been affirmed or negated, it is explicitly impermissible to use it in the realm of the Names and Attributes. As for the realm of '*Information*' (*al-Akhbār*)[175], some of the *Salaf* prohibited it and amongst them are those who allowed it on the condition that the speaker is to be questioned on his intention. If the speaker intends something true, which is fitting for Allāh (*ta'āla*), it is acceptable, and if he intended a meaning not fitting for Allāh (*'azza wa jalla*), it has to be rejected and refuted".[176]

The comprehensive statement is that there exist three domains in this issue:

1. The domain of the Names, of which, one can only depend on the Book and Sunnah.
2. The domain of the Attributes, of which again, one can only depend on the Book and Sunnah.
3. The domain of information. Concerning this area, it is not a con-

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[175] Talking about Allāh (*ta'āla*) and describing Him falls under three categories: (1) Describing Him with His Names, (2) Describing Him with His Attributes. Both these two categories are dependent solely on the Book and authentic Sunnah. 3. The third category is when one talks about Allāh in a way that is permissible and employs a meaning which is not found in the Book and Sunnah but its meaning is required and its affirmation is legal because of its indication of a good meaning or a meaning that does not contain anything ill. However, such a meaning does not belong to Allāh's Names and Attributes. Examples of this are when one says for example, 'Allāh is *present* and in *existence*' or when one says 'Allāh is the greatest *thing* in existence'. For a detailed discussion on this one can refer to, for example, *al-Qawā'id al-Kulliyyah lī al-Asmā' wa al-Ṣifāt* by Shaykh al-Buraykān, published by Dār al-Hijrah, K.S.A. [t]

[176] *Risālah fī al-'Aql wa al-Rūḥ* of Ibn Taymiyyah, Vol. 2, pp. 46-47.

dition that textual evidence establishes it, but the stipulation is that the meaning of the term used is not an ill one.

The people of *ta' ṭīl* on the other hand, made the [العقل] intellect alone, the basis of their knowledge. The *Shubah al-'Aqliyyah*[177] to them represent the primary absolute fundamentals. These fundamentals are what affirm and negate, thereafter the Book and Sunnah are viewed and judged by these *Shubah al-'Aqliyyah*. If the texts of the Book and Sunnah agree with these fundamentals, they are accepted as a secondary support **not** primary. If they clash however, these *Sharī' ah* texts are rejected and discarded.

One of them declares in connection to this: "Everything related by the [السَّمْع] *al-Sam'* [178] is looked into; if the intellect allows it, one must believe in it, and as for that which the intellect judges to be impossible, one must perform *ta' wīl* of that which the *Sam'* relates. It is inconceivable for the *Sam'* to contain something conclusive and definite that opposes the intellect. The apparent *aḥādīth* of *tashbīh*[179], most of them are inauthentic and the authentic of them are not conclusive, rather they are open to *ta'wīl*..."[180]

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[177] i.e. specious and false arguments that rely solely on their stray intellect, which does not seek enlightenment from the light of revelation. One such false argument, which pertains to our discussion, is that the Attributes are to be negated from Allāh because the human intellect - which is really a reference to their darkened and stray intellect and not the sound and pure intellect - deems them impermissible for Allāh! [t]

[178] *Al-Sam'*, lexically means hearing. This term is used to connote revelation, i.e. the Book and Sunnah. The appropriateness of the word is because of the fact that revelation is transmitted by speech, which in turn is picked up through hearing. [t]

[179] He means by this, the *aḥādīth* pertaining to the Attributes of Allāh!

[180] *Al-Iqtiṣād fī al-'Itiqād* of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazāli, pp. 132-133. He also said in his book al-Mustaṣfā, 2/137-138: "Everything which the *'aql* indicates concerning it towards one of the two sides, then there is no room for contradiction. Since, it is impossible to abrogate or falsify the evidences and fundamentals pertaining to the *'aql*. If an evidence pertaining to the *Sam'* is related that is in opposition to the *'aql*, then either it is not *mutawātir* and hence it will be known that it is not authentic or it is *mutāwatir* and hence *ta'wīl* is to be made of it and it will no longer be contradictory..."

This excerpt shows you the extent to which these people give precedence to their *Shubah al-ʿAqliyyah* as well as the fanatical inclination they have towards it. It also makes evident as to how it is that they declared them as the fundamentals and that the *Samʿ* (revelation) is viewed and judged in light of these fundamentals. That which their minds deem permissible is accepted, and that which their minds do not allow, they raise doubts in and debase.

Thereafter, they proceed to commit *ta'wīl* and *taḥrīf* of the texts.

If one looks into the books of the *Ashāʿirah*, for example, one finds that they classify belief into the sections *al-Ilāhiyyāt* (Divine matters), *al-Nubūwāt* (matters pertaining to Prophethood) and *al-Samʿiyyāt*.

They do not accept the texts of the Book and Sunnah in the sections of *al-Ilāhiyyāt* and *al-Nubūwāt*. Accordingly, you will only find in these two sections *Shubah al-ʿAqliyyah,* which are contrived upon principles from logic.

How amazing! Are we to take our religion from the speech of Allāh and His Messenger or from the heretics of Greece and their students!

As for the section of *al-Samʿiyyāt*, i.e. issues related to the Day of Resurrection and Congregation, Paradise, Hell, promises and threats, they accept *Sharīʿah* texts. This is why they named this section *al-Samʿiyyāt* (matters which are connected or emanate from the *Samʿ*) in stark contrast to the sections of *al-Ilāhiyyāt* and *al-Nubūwāt* in which they rely upon the intellect.

These people are similar in condition to those whom Allāh (*taʿāla*) spoke about when He said:

أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ ٱلْكِتَـٰبِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ
بِبَعْضٍ ۚ فَمَا جَزَآءُ مَن يَفْعَلُ ذَٰلِكَ مِنكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْىٌ
فِى ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا ۖ وَيَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَـٰمَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰٓ أَشَدِّ ٱلْعَذَابِ ۗ
وَمَا ٱللَّهُ بِغَـٰفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

> **"Do you then believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in another part. So what is the recompense of those who do that amongst you except humiliation in the life of this world, and on the Day of Standing they will be returned to the most severest punishment, and Allāh is not unaware of what you do."**[181]

As for **the second foundation**, this is to exalt and elevate Allāh over and above resembling His creation, within it is a distinguishing factor that sets apart the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* from the belief of the *Muʿaṭṭilah* from one viewpoint, and from the belief of the *Mushabbihah* from another.

Ahl al-Sunnah believe that nothing of Allāh's creation resembles Him in the Attributes He is characterised with. Allāh (*ʿazza wa jalla*) has indeed informed us about this by the very text of His mighty Book, when He said:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَىْءٌۖ وَهُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

> **"...There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer."**[182]

Consequently, if a particular text of the Book or Sunnah mentions an attribute of Allāh (*taʿāla*), it is obligatory to believe in it. One must also possess unequivocal conviction that the attribute is at such a level of perfection, nobility and loftiness that it cuts away at all that gives rise to erroneous impressions of similitude between Allāh and the Attributes of His creation.

Indeed, it is truly evil to not glorify Allāh and for the notion that the Attribute of Allāh resembles the attribute of His creation to precede to the person's mind. It is a duty upon the believing heart, which believes in the Attributes of Allāh that His Prophet praised and glorified Him with, to be one that glorifies Allāh (*jalla wa ʿalā*) and not to be polluted with the filth of *tashbīh,* so that the bedrock of his heart is good and pure, and open to possessing *īmān* in the Attributes upon the basis

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[181] Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):85.

[182] Sūrah al-Shūrā (42):11.

of exaltation and elevation, in accordance with His (*ta'āla*) saying:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَىْءٌ ۖ وَهُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

> **"...There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer."**[183,184]

The people of *ta'ṭīl* however, understood of Allāh's Names and Attributes only that which is fitting for creation, after which, they proceeded to negate those conceptions, which in reality only existed in their corrupt minds. The belief of these *Mu'aṭṭilah* combines both *tamthīl* and *tashbīh*. This evil emanated from the corruption and pollution of their hearts with the filth of tashbih. When they heard of an attribute of perfection, which Allāh praised Himself with, like His ascension above His Throne, His Approach[185] on the Day of Standing and other such Attributes of Majesty and Perfection etc., the first notion that came to their mind was that this particular Attribute resembles the attribute of creation. So the heart becomes stained with the filth of *tashbīh*. Allāh was not regarded in a worthy manner as He rightfully deserves and nor was He glorified in the true praiseworthy manner, due to the notion that the Attribute of the Creator is like the attribute of creation being the first thought to come to his mind.

Hence, the heart is firstly polluted with the filth of *tashbīh* and this then prompts him to negate Allāh's Attribute (*jalla wa 'alā*) on the claim that it resembles the attributes of creation. Thus, he is initially a *mushabbih* and then ends up a *mu'attil* and is misguided from the beginning to the end, assaulting the Lord of the worlds by negating His Attributes upon the claim that these Attributes are not fitting.[186]

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[183] Sūrah al-Shūra (42):11.

[184] Refer to *Manhaj wa Dirāsāt li āyāt al-Asmā wa al-Ṣifāt*, pp. 21-22.

[185] Allāh says in Sūrah al-Fajr (89), *āyāt* 21-22: **"Nay! When the earth is ground to powder, and your Lord comes with the Angels in rows."** [t]

[186] Refer to *Manhaj wa Dirāsāt li āyāt al-Asmā wa al-Ṣifāt*, pp. 19-20.

Whereas with regard to the belief of the people of *tamthīl*, this stands upon their claim that Allāh (*'azza wa jalla*) only addresses us with that which we can comprehend. Accordingly, if He informs us of a Hand, the only hand we know of is this limb (of ours). They therefore, likened the Attributes of the Creator to the attributes of creation saying, 'He has a Hand like my hand.' Highly Exalted and Elevated is Allāh above that.

As for those who truly know Allāh, who truly believe in His Messengers and truly attest and acknowledge His Perfection, they affirm for Allāh all of His Attributes and negate any resemblance to creation. Thus, they combine affirmation with negation of any resemblance (tashbīh) and they combine exaltation and elevation without negation (*ta'ṭīl*).

Their way is a good one between two bad ones and one of guidance between two deviations.

As for **the third foundation,** within it is a distinguishing factor that sets apart the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* from the belief of the *Mushabbihah*. *Ahl al-Sunnah* entrust to Allāh (*'azza wa jalla*) the knowledge of how the Originator (*'azza wa jalla*) is actually characterised with those Attributes. Mankind has no knowledge of the nature of Allāh's (*tabāraka wa ta'āla*) Essence "nor any explanation of the reality of any of the Attributes of our Lord (*ta'āla*) for one to be able to say, for example, 'He ascended in such a manner.' Anyone who dares to do such a thing, his statement is one of extremism in the religion and a lie upon Allāh (*'azza wa jalla*). It is also a belief on something that Allāh did not permit. Moreover, it is not fitting to His Majesty and Greatness and neither the Book nor Sunnah have mentioned it.

If such a thing was demanded from the servants in the *Sharī'ah*, Allāh (*ta'āla*) and His Messenger (ﷺ) would have informed us of such. Allāh informed and explained everything which the Muslims were in need of, and the servants do not know of anything about Allāh except that which He Himself has made known to them, as He (*ta'āla*) says:

وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِۦٓ إِلَّا بِمَا شَآءَ

"...and they will never encompass anything of His knowledge except which He wills..."[187]

Therefore, the servant should believe in that which Allāh (*taʿāla*) has informed him of and abide by it, he should withhold with regard to that which he is ignorant about and entrust its meaning to the one who has knowledge of it."[188]

As for the *Mushabbihah*, they delved deeply into the issue of the nature of Allāh's Attributes and alleged about Allāh without knowledge, so they said, 'He has Sight like my sight, a Hand like my hand and a Foot like my foot.' Highly Exalted and Elevated is Allāh above what they say.

A Clarification of These Foundations

THE FIRST FOUNDATION: TO POSSESS ĪMĀN IN ALL THE NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES THAT HAVE BEEN MENTIONED IN THE QUR'ĀN AND THE AUTHENTIC SUNNAH BY WAY OF AFFIRMING AND NEGATING WHERE APPROPRIATE.

This foundation calls for the following points to be observed:

One: The seeking of knowledge in divine matters is only acquired by way of the Book, Sunnah and statements of the *Salaf* of this *ummah*.

One must therefore believe that knowledge of this category of *tawḥīd* is dependent upon studying the Book and Sunnah by virtue of the fact that this *tawḥīd* calls for Names and Attributes that are particular.

There is no route to knowing or acquiring these Names and Attributes other than the Book and Sunnah "so we believe in Allāh (*taʿāla*) and in the most beautiful Names and Most Exalted Attributes that pertain

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[187] Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):255.

[188] See *Maʿārij al-Qabūl*, Vol. 1, pp. 326-327.

to Him (*subḥānahu*), which He has informed us of upon the tongues of His Messengers, without any *takyīf* and *tamthīl*.

We negate from Him everything that does not befit His Majesty and Glory, which He Himself has negated, as there is none more Knowledgeable than He of Himself and all others. He is also the Most Truthful in Speech and the clearest in establishing proofs".[189]

On account of this, the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* was one of belief in all that Allāh named and described Himself with by way of affirmation or negation.

This because there can be none who Names Allāh who is more knowledgeable of Allāh than Himself. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

ءَأَنتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ ٱللَّهُ

"...are you more knowledgeable or is Allāh?.."[190]

Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ قِيلًا

"...and who is more truthful in speech than Allāh?.."[191]

Allāh (*ta'āla*) also says:

وَلَا يُنَبِّئُكَ مِثْلُ خَبِيرٍ

"...and none can inform you like an All-Knower (i.e. Allāh)..."[192]

Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

فَسْـَٔلْ بِهِۦ خَبِيرًا

"...then ask of Him as He is an all-knower"[193]

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[189] *Ma'ārij al-Qabūl*, 1/330-331.

[190] Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):140.

[191] Sūrah al-Nisā' (4):122.

[192] Sūrah al-Fāṭir (35):14.

[193] Sūrah al-Furqān (25):59.

Hence, Allāh is the one who named and described Himself with what is present in His own speech, which is the Qur'ān.

Likewise, there can be none who Names and describes Allāh, who is more knowledgeable of Allāh after Allāh Himself, than the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ). Allāh has said concerning him:

وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰٓ ۝٣ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْىٌ يُوحَىٰ ۝٤

> **"Nor does he speak of his own desire, it is but an inspiration that is inspired."[194]**

The message of the Prophet (ﷺ) came containing a detailed affirmation of His Attributes, in a manner that gladdened the chests, brought tranquillity to the hearts and caused *īmān* to settle in its proper place. This matter was even elaborated to a deeper level than the explanation of commands and prohibitions. It was also defined and established completely in a very eloquent articulation.

In light of this, it is deemed obligatory upon every Muslim to believe in the Names of Allāh and in His Attributes mentioned in the Book and the Sunnah without adding or omitting from them.

Two: Revelation is placed before the intellect, the basic principle in the religion therefore is one of compliance and the intellect follows.

The belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* in this domain as well as the rest of the areas of belief and that of the laws is that the intellect alone does not have the authority to affirm anything in connection to beliefs or laws. The source for this affirmation is none other than the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

The intellect cannot comprehend the Names and Attributes that Allāh (*ta'āla*) deserves, so it is imperative to stay and remain with the text. This is because the intellect is incapable of grasping the reality of the ghayb (i.e. that which is beyond the senses) even if such hidden matters were the closest things to it. The intellect is unable to attain any

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[194] Sūrah al-Najm (53):3-4.

perception of the reality of its soul, which is contained within it, because Allāh has made its affair hidden, as He (*ta'āla*) says:

وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلرُّوحِ ۖ قُلِ ٱلرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّى
وَمَآ أُوتِيتُم مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٥﴾

"And they ask you concerning the *Rūh*, Say, 'The *Rūh* is from the affairs of my Lord, and you have not been given of knowledge except a little".[195]

Thus, if the person is ignorant of the affair of his own soul, how is he able to encompass any knowledge of Allāh's Essence and of the Names and Attributes that are deserving of His Essence, when Allāh has hidden the reality of His Essence from His creation?

If we were to contemplate all that has come to us from the affairs of the religion such as the mention of Allāh's Attributes and the belief with which mankind worships Allāh, for instance, mention of the Punishment of the Grave, the questioning by *Munkar* and *Nakīr*, the Fountain, the Scales, the *Sirāt*, and the description of Paradise and Hellfire, we find that they are matters of which we cannot comprehend their realities.

The fact of the matter is that the command to accept them and to believe in them has been related.

Thus, if we hear of something associated to the matters of our religion and we are able to comprehend and understand it, then to Allāh belongs the praise and gratitude for that and from Him is the success.

As for that which we cannot comprehend, which our minds cannot grasp, we believe in it, attest to its truth and believe that this is from His Lordship and Capability. We suffice in that by His Knowledge and Will, Allāh (*ta'āla*) says[196],

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[195] Sūrah al-Isrā' (17):85.

[196] Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):256.

وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِۦٓ إِلَّا بِمَا شَآءَ

'...and they will never encompass anything of His Knowledge except which He Wills...'."[197]

"Know that the distinguishing factor between us and the *Mu'aṭṭilah* is the issue of the intellect, for they formulated their religion upon the intellect and made the matter of adherence and narrations subservient to it.

As for *Ahl al-Sunnah*, they declared the foundation of the religion to be adherence and the intellect to be subservient to it. If the basis of the religion was based upon the intellect, creation would have no need of revelation and the Prophets, the meaning of commands and prohibitions would be no more and anyone would assert that which they desire".[198]

The decree that revelation is put before the intellect should not be understood to mean that *Ahl al-Sunnah* disown the intellect and the attainment of knowledge with it, or deny reflecting with it on the creation of the Heavens and the Earth and the many signs within the universe.

Ahl al-Sunnah do not deny the use of the intellect, but they have adopted a balanced position with regard to it, between two groups that deviated in this respect. They are:

1. *Ahl al-Kalām*, who make the intellect alone, the basis of their knowledge and single it out.

They declare *īmān* and the Qur'ān secondary to it. The principles that are contrived from their intellect are to them the primary absolute fundamentals, which are totally independent of *īmān* and the Qur'ān.

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[197] *Al-Ḥujjah fī Bayān al-Maḥajjah* 1/321, abridged.

[198] *Al-Ḥujjah fī Bayān al-Maḥajjah*, 1/320.

These people made their minds the authority that affirms and negates, and the *Sam'* was subjected to it. If revelation agrees with these fundamentals, they are accepted as a secondary support, not primary, and if it opposes them, it is rejected and discarded.

This is one of the greatest causes of deviation that has entered into this *ummah*.

2. *Ahl al-Tasawwuf (Sūfīs)*, who censure and find fault with the intellect.

They hold that the higher states and lofty positions can only be attained without the intellect, and they acknowledge and affirm issues, that the pure mind rejects.

They praise intoxication, dementia, to lose one's head with passionate love and other such matters and states which can only be achieved with the cessation of the intellect and the inability to distinguish.

They believe in matters, of which the intellect clearly points to their falsity.

Both of these two groups are censured.

As for *Ahl al-Sunnah*, they hold that the intellect is a condition for attaining knowledge and a condition for the perfection and correctness of actions. With it, knowledge and action is completed but it is not independent in this.

The intellect is an instinct and faculty within the person, like the faculty of sight within the eye. If the light of *īmān* and the Qur'ān reaches the intellect, it will be similar to the eye, when the light of the sun or a fire reaches it.

If however, it stands alone, it cannot see or grasp the matters that it is incapable of comprehending independently. If the intellect vanishes in its entirety, speech and actions without the intellect will be representative of animal behaviour.

In conclusion, the states achieved without the intellect are incomplete,

the teachings that oppose the intellect are false, and the Messengers brought that which the intellect is incapable of comprehending, not that which the intellect deems to be impossible[199] [200].

A beneficial side-point: **The location of the [العقل] Intellect.**

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah was asked, 'Where does the (*'Aql*) intellect lie within a person?'[201]

He replied: "The *'Aql* is a quality of the person who is able to reason, as for where it is in the body, it pertains to his heart (*qalb*). Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا۟ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَآ

"Have they not travelled through the land, whereby they have hearts they comprehend with..."[202]

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[199] The Messengers (*'alayhim al-Salām*) brought some fundamentals and issues that pertain to *īmān*, of which the human intellect is unable to comprehend their realities. Despite this, the human intellect that is impartial cannot assert, let alone affirm, the impossibility and inconceivability of these matters. For example, the Messengers conveyed to us the matter of having *īmān* in the Angels, and the Book and authentic Sunnah relate many of their characteristics, which bewilder and dazzle the minds. The human intellect cannot independently acquire knowledge of these characteristics and yet, the impartial intellect, even if it does not possess belief in the revelation that has related this information, cannot assert, let alone affirm, the impossibility of the existence of the Angels along with their characteristics. You will not find a single matter within this mighty and safeguarded religion, which is preserved in the Qur'ān and authentic Sunnah, that the just and pure intellect is able to deem impossible. The reasoning behind this is that the *Naql al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic and truthful related information) does not contradict the *'Aql al-Sarīh* (the pure and uncorrupted intellect) since both emanate from one source, Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*). [t]

[200] *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* 3/338-339, abridged.

[201] This particular excerpt is only a part of a lengthy answer, which Shaykh al-Islām gave in response to a number of questions concerning the *'aql* and *rūḥ*. Refer to *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 9/271-304. [t]

[202] Sūrah al-Ḥajj (22):46.

Furthermore, Ibn ʿAbbās was questioned, 'How did you attain knowledge?' He replied: 'with a tongue that questions much and a heart that comprehends well'.

However, the term '*Qalb*' can mean:

(i) the pine-like shaped morsel of flesh located on the left side of the body (i.e. the heart), which contains black coagulated blood, as in the *ḥadīth* in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said: *"Indeed, there is within the body a morsel of flesh, if it is sound, then the whole body is sound and if it is corrupt, then the whole body is corrupt; indeed, it is the heart (qalb)."*

(ii) the word *qalb* can also be used to simply mean the inside or centre of something. So the *qalb* of something is it's inside, as in the *qalb* of a wheat-grain, an almond or walnut. For this very reason a well is named *qalīb* because its *qalb*, which is its inside, has been taken out. In view of this, if this connotation is intended with the word *qalb,* the *ʿAql* will pertain to a person's brain as well. This is why it has been stated that the *ʿAql* lies in the brain as asserted by many doctors. This has been reported on Imām Ahmad, and a party of his companions declared, *'The basis of the ʿAql is in the heart, when it reaches perfection it ends at the brain'.*

The precise determination is that the *Rūḥ*, which is the soul, pertains to both this and that, and the *ʿAql* that this soul is characterised with (also) pertains to this and that[203].

However, the starting point of thoughts and reflections is in the brain and the starting point of intentions is in the heart. Furthermore, the (term) *al-ʿAql* can connote *knowledge* and it can also connote *action* (depending on the usage of the word).

Thus, knowledge and voluntary actions are founded firstly from intentions, and the starting point of intentions is in the heart. The one who desires or intends something can only do so after first perceiving

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[203] The meaning of *this and that*: the heart and brain. [t]

the desire or intention. So the heart must be able to perceive, hence, the heart has this and that[204].

This starts from the brain and its effects rise back to the brain. Consequently, from the brain is the beginning and to it is the end.

Both statements have a correct viewpoint."[205]

Three: To believe in the meanings and rulings indicated by the texts of the Names and Attributes.

Thus, the *Salaf* believe in the Names and Attributes of Allāh and in the meanings and rulings indicated by them, as for their true nature, they entrust this knowledge to Allāh.

They are free of what the *Mu'aṭṭilah* accused them of; they alleged that the *Salaf* believe in the words of the texts concerning the Names and Attributes but that they entrust the knowledge of their meanings to Allāh.[206]

This claim is ignorance of the *Salaf*, for they possessed the greatest understanding and contemplation of the *āyāt* of the Book and the *aḥādīth* of the Prophet (ﷺ), especially with respect to the knowledge of Allāh (*ta'āla*).

They understood the meaning of what they read and of the knowledge they possessed, but they did not concern themselves with the *ghayb*, which is barred from them. They did not delve into the nature of the

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[204] The meaning here of *this and that*: knowledge and action. [t]

[205] *Risālah Fi al-'Aql wa al-Rūḥ* 2/48-49, published within the collection *Majmū' al-Rasā'il al-Muniriyyah*.

[206] Knowledge of the Attributes is of two types: (i) Knowledge of their meanings, which the *Salaf* understand and affirm and (ii) knowledge of their true reality and designation, which the *Salaf* plead ignorant to, do not question and maintain that none of creation possesses this knowledge as it is with Allāh alone. Some of the groups of innovation as well as a number of scholars who did not establish themselves firmly upon the foundations of the *Salaf* in this area and who misunderstood some of the statements of the *Salaf*, incorrectly attributed to the *Salaf* that they pleaded ignorant of both types of knowledge. [t]

Attributes, which was the case of the people of *Kalām* and innovations.

As a result, when these people did delve into the issue of the essence of Allāh and His Attributes, they committed *ta'wīl* and *ta' ṭīl*. The reason which caused them to do so was the constriction that they felt as a result of *tashbīh*. They sought to flee from it and thus, ended up committing *ta' ṭīl*. *Ta' ṭīl* has always been committed as a result of *tashbīh*.

If only they had initially exalted Allāh above any similarity to His creation and affirmed the Attributes whilst negating any likeness, they would have escaped and succeeded as well as agreed with the belief of the *Salaf* and come to realise that the *Salaf* were not (mere) carriers of scrolls the contents of which they did not understand.

One who contemplates the statements of the famous *Imāms* of the *Salaf* in this realm will realise that they had the most precise insight and were the most knowledgeable in this area, and that those who opposed them did not understand the reality of the statements of the *Salaf* and the *Imāms*. This is why those who differed (from them) became rivals to each other with regard to the Book and stood in opposition to the Book. Allāh (*ta' āla*) has said[207]:

وَإِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱخْتَلَفُوا۟ فِى ٱلْكِتَـٰبِ لَفِى شِقَاقٍۭ بَعِيدٍ ﴿١٧٦﴾

"And verily, those who disputed in the Book are far away in opposition".[208]

Anyone who has read the statements of the *Salaf* that are recorded in the books of belief, *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* concerning discussing the texts that mention the Attributes, will know that the *Salaf* discussed the meanings of the Attributes, explained them and did not remain silent about them. These statements stand as the greatest testimony to the understanding of the *Salaf* on the meanings of the Attributes and to their belief in them.

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[207] Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):176.

[208] *Dar' al-Ta' āruḍ al-' Aql wa al-Naql*, 2/301.

Four: Rejection of *taḥrīf* and *ta'ṭīl* of the texts of the Names and Attributes.

The *Salaf* believe that the obligation towards the texts of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, which include the texts of the Names and Attributes, is to employ and understand them according to their apparent meaning. This is achieved by understanding them in the manner dictated by the Arabic tongue, and by not subjecting them to any *taḥrīf* or *ta' ṭīl* as did the *Mu' aṭṭilah.* They tampered with the apparent meaning of the texts simply because of the fact that it conflicted with their falsity and corrupt methodology.

The texts of the Attributes are legal (*Sharī' ah*) words and as such, their sanctity must be maintained. This is fulfilled by understanding them in accordance with the intended meaning of the Legislator (i.e., Allāh). We do not tamper with their meanings in order to direct them away from the intended meaning of the Legislator.

Thus, among the comprehensive fundamentals with the *Salaf* is that legal words possess their sanctity, and that it is from the perfection of knowledge to seek out the desired meaning intended by Allāh and His Messenger, so that one can affirm the meanings that Allāh and His Messenger have affirmed and negate the meanings that Allāh and his Messenger have negated.[209]

By the praise and favour of Allāh, we find that the texts related in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah are very clear and numerous, to the extent that it is impossible to perform *ta'wīl* on them and to tamper with them. For surety, the message of the Prophet (ﷺ) came containing a detailed affirmation of the Attributes, in a manner that put an end to any misconception and unveiled any screen. It brought about certain knowledge and removed all doubt and ambiguity, gladdened the chests, brought tranquillity to the hearts and caused *īmān* to settle in its proper place. The message of our Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) elaborated on the Names, Attributes and Actions of Allāh to a level greater than that

[209] *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, 12/113-114, abridged.

of commands and prohibitions. It also defined and established this in a complete way and in a most eloquent articulation.

One who is familiar and well aware of the texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah can only increase in his despise of the *Mu'aṭṭilah* because of their *taḥrīf* and in his certainty of the rottenness and falsity of their belief.

The *taḥrīf* of the *Mu'aṭṭilah* is only spread amongst those ignorant of the knowledge of these texts, who are not familiar with them. Such a person is undermined by his ignorance and not because of a lack of texts related on this topic, and Allāh knows best.

THE SECOND FOUNDATION: TO EXALT AND ELEVATE ALLĀH (JALLA WA 'ALĀ) OVER AND ABOVE THE MATTER OF ANY OF HIS ATTRIBUTES EVER RESEMBLING ATTRIBUTES OF HIS CREATION.

The clarification of this foundation is made by the following:

One: *Sharī'ah* proofs which relate the elevation and exaltation of Allāh above any resemblance to His creation.

1. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِۦ شَىْءٌ ۖ وَهُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

> **"...There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer."[210]**

2. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

فَلَا تَضْرِبُوا۟ لِلَّهِ ٱلْأَمْثَالَ

"So do not set forth parables for Allāh"[211]

3. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

وَلِلَّهِ ٱلْمَثَلُ ٱلْأَعْلَىٰ

[210] Sūrah al-Shūra (42):11.

[211] Sūrah al-Naḥl (16):74.

"...and for Allāh is the highest description..."[212]

4. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

وَلَهُ ٱلْمَثَلُ ٱلْأَعْلَىٰ

"...His is the highest description..."[213]

5. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُۥ سَمِيًّا

"...Do you know of any one who is similar to him".[214]

6. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

قُلْ هُوَ ٱللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

"Say, 'He is Allāh, (the) One".[215]

7. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌۢ

"And there is no co-equal or comparable unto Him".[216]

Deduction of the *āyāt*:

1. His (*'azza wa jalla*) saying, **"...There is nothing like Him..."** is an evidence exhibiting that Allāh is Exalted above anything resembling any of His Attributes of Perfection.[217]

This *āyah* is explained in one of two ways:

(a) The meaning of the *āyah* is, He is not like anything, and the word (*mithl*) was introduced to provide emphasis.

(b) Its meaning is, there is none like unto Him, and the particle (*kāf*)

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[212] Sūrah al-Naḥl (16):60.

[213] Sūrah al-Rūm (30):27.

[214] Sūrah Maryam (19):65.

[215] Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ (112):1.

[216] Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ (112):4.

[217] *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, 16/98.

was introduced to provide emphasis.[218] This viewpoint is strong, agreeable and the more apparent.[219]

Ahl al-Sunnah agree that there is nothing like Allāh in His Essence, Attributes and actions.[220]

2. His (*ta'āla*) saying, **"So do not set forth parables for Allāh"**

Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī said in commentary to it: "So do not provide for Allāh parables, nor compare Him by setting up counterparts, for He has no like or similitude".[221]

Ibn Kathīr said: "i.e. do not set up with Allāh rivals, likes or parables".

3. His (*ta'āla*) saying, **"For those who do not believe in the Hereafter is an evil description and for Allāh is the highest description..."**

4. His (*ta'āla*) saying, **"...and His is the highest description in the heavens and in the earth; and He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."**

"Allāh (*ta'āla*) has depicted Himself that He has the highest description, and that is a reference to absolute perfection, which embodies matters that are present and meanings that are affirmed.[222]

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[218] *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 25/12-13.

[219] *Sharḥ al-Ṭahāwiyyah*, p. 146.

[220] *Sharḥ al-Ṭahāwiyyah*, p. 99.

[221] *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 14/148.

[222] '*matters that are present*': this is a reference to the affirmation of the perfect presence of Allāh which embodies the affirmation of His perfect Attributes, contrary to those who described Allāh with non-existence or negated His Names and Attributes and in effect only affirm for Allāh an abstract presence in their minds, since the only place that an essence can exist without Attributes, is in one's mind, may Allāh protect us from such deviation. '*meanings that are affirmed*': this is a reference to the affirmation of the Attributes of perfection, contrary to those who adopt the methodology of negation only and say for example when describing Allāh, 'He is not ignorant, He is not an oppressor' and so on, without affirming Knowledge and Justice for Allāh and the complete meanings they entail. This negation as explained in a previous footnote does not embody praise of Allāh if the opposites of these negated matters are not affirmed for Allāh in the most perfect manner befitting Him. [t]

The more they are present and perfect in the one being depicted, the more perfect the depicted becomes and the higher He is above anything else. Since the Attributes of the Lord (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) are greater and more complete, the highest description was His, and He was more deserving of it than anyone or anything else.

In fact, it is impossible for two to share in the absolute highest description, because if both were equals from every angle, none of the two would be higher than the other one. If on the other hand, they are not equal, the one depicted with the highest description would therefore only be one of them. Hence, it is impossible for the one who possesses the highest description to have a like or rival. This is a decisive evidence for the impossibility of *tamthīl* and *tashbīh*, so reflect on it as it is extremely clear and powerful."[223]

5. His (*ta'āla*) saying, **"...Do you know of any one who is similar to him."**

It is reported on Ibn 'Abbās that he said when commentating on the *āyah*: "Do you know of any match or peer to the Lord?"

Mujāhid, Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr, Qatādah, Ibn Jurayj and others have said the same.

6. As for His (*ta'āla*) saying, **"Say, 'He is Allāh, (the) One."**

The *One* implies that He has no like or equal.

7. Likewise, His (*ta'āla*) saying, **"And there is no co-equal or comparable unto Him."**

Oneness implies perfection and partnership signifies imperfection.

Two: The indication of the intellect towards the falsity of any resemblance between the Attributes of the Creator and the attributes of creation.

1. The position towards the essence is the same as the position towards the Attributes. Allāh has no like unto Him in His essence, Attributes

[223] *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Munazzalah*, 3/1032 and *Sharḥ al-Ṭaḥāwiyyah*, p. 144.

and actions. Thus, if He has a real Essence that does not resemble other essences, this Essence is characterised by real Attributes that do not resemble the attributes of all other essences.[224]

It is of inevitable knowledge that the Creator and creation differ in essence. This deems necessary a difference in attributes because the attributes of everything depicted befits itself as is very clear with the attributes of the types of creation that differ in their essences. The strength of a camel for example is not like the strength of an atom. Consequently, if the difference between the types of creation is evident although they all subscribe to possibility and novelty[225], the manifestation of the difference between creation and the Creator will be more obvious and even stronger.[226]

In view of this, we know that Allāh has no like and similitude, and parables that bear a resemblance to creation are not set forth for Him, rather, He has the highest description.

2. It is argued, 'How can the Attributes of the Lord, the Creator, the perfect from all angles be like the attributes of the creation, the owned, the commanded and nurtured, the imperfect and the needy of one who can perfect him?'

Is not such a belief anything but a detraction of the Creator's due? For indeed, a declared likeness between the perfect and imperfect deems the perfect imperfect![227]

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[224] *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, 16/99.

[225] i.e. the existence of these creations are not a must but a possibility according to the will of the Creator, it is only the Creator whose existence is essential. Likewise, these creations are novelties in the sense that they came about after not being in existence, contrary to Allāh, who has always existed. Thus, if these different creations share in these two fundamental matters and yet the characteristics between them differ, then how can one not comprehend the essential fact that the Attributes of the Creator do not resemble the attributes of creation given that Allāh does not ascribe to this possibility and novelty of existence? [t]

[226] *Al-Qawā'id al-Muthlā*, page 26.

[227] *Al-Qawā'id al-Muthlā*, page 26.

3. "If a particular creation is free of resemblance of another creation whilst they agree in name, then the Creator is more deserving to be free and Exalted above any resemblance to creation even if there is a conformity in name."[228]

"Allāh (*subḥānahu wa taʿāla*) has informed us of the different creations in Paradise, such as the types of food, drink, clothing, women and dwellings. He told us that there is in Paradise, milk; honey; wine; water; meat; fruit; silk; gold; silver; *ḥūr*[229] and palaces.

Ibn ʿAbbās has said, 'There is nothing in this world that is in Paradise, except names'.

Thus, if these realities that Allāh has informed us of agree in name with the realities present in this world, and there is no resemblance between them, in fact, there is such a difference between them that only Allāh (*taʿāla*) knows of, then the Creator's (*subḥānahu wa taʿāla*) difference to that of creation will be even greater than the differences present between different creations themselves. The difference between Him and creation is far greater than the difference between what is present in the Hereafter and what is present in this world, since a particular type of creation is closer to another creation it agrees with in name than the Creator is to creation. This is very clear and evident".[230]

Three: Conformity in names does not necessitate a likeness between the named.

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah said: "Allāh (*subḥānahu wa taʿāla*) named Himself and His Attributes with certain names, and with these (same) names, He named some of His creation.

He named Himself the Living, Knower, Hearer, Seer, Mighty, Compeller, Supreme, King, Kind and Merciful.

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[228] *Al-Risālah al-Tadmuriyyah*, p. 50.

[229] *Ḥūr al-ʿAyn*: Women of Paradise possessing wide lovely eyes. [t]

[230] *Al-Risālah al-Tadmuriyyah*, p. 47.

Allāh also named some of His creation as knower, forbearing, kind, merciful, hearer, seer, king, mighty, compeller and supreme.

It is very clear that the former Knower (i.e. Allāh) is not like the latter knower (i.e. a creation of his), this Forbearing is not like that forbearing, this Hearer is not like that hearer and so on with the rest of Allāh's Names.

Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

"...Verily, Allāh is ('*alīm*) ever Knowing, Wise.[231]

Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) also says:

وَبَشَّرُوهُ بِغُلَٰمٍ عَلِيمٍ

> **"...and they gave him glad tidings of a son, ('*alīm*) having knowledge".**[232]

Allāh says:

إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا

"...Truly, He is (*ḥalīm*) Forbearing, (*ghafūr*) Forgiving".[233]

Allāh also says:

فَبَشَّرْنَٰهُ بِغُلَٰمٍ حَلِيمٍ

> **"So we gave him glad tidings of a (*ḥalīm*) forbearing boy".**[234]

Allāh says:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بِٱلنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

> **"...Truly, Allāh is (*ra'ūf*) full of kindness, (*raḥīm*) the most Merciful towards mankind".**[235]

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[231] Sūrah al-Insāan (76):30.

[232] Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt (51):28.

[233] Sūrah al-Isrā' (17):44.

[234] Sūrah al-Ṣāfāt (37):101.

[235] Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):143.

Allāh also says[236]:

بِٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

"...for the believers, He is (*ra'ūf*) full of pity, kind and (*raḥīm*) Merciful".[237]

Allāh says:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

"...Truly, Allāh is (*samī'*) ever Hearer, (*baṣīr*) Seer".[238]

Allāh (*ta'āla*) also says:

فَجَعَلْنَٰهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

"...so we made him (*samī'*) hearer, (*baṣīr*) seer".[239]

Similar is the case for all the Attributes mentioned. **However, the person takes heed from that which he knows with regard to that which he does not know.** If this were not the case, the ways of learning about the matters pertaining to the *ghayb* would be blocked from him.

The person knows that he is living, knowledgeable and able, and that he is a hearer, seer and speaker, so he uses this knowledge to understand what Allāh has informed about Himself, that He is living, knowledgeable, able, a hearer and seer. If he were unable to perceive and see these meanings in himself, he would not be able to understand that which is hidden from him. Just as, if he were not able to perceive the honey, milk, water, wine, silk, gold and silver in this world, he would not be able to understand what Allāh informed him of the *ghayb* in regard to that.

This however, does not necessitate that the *ghayb* be the same as the witnessed, for Ibn 'Abbās has said, *'There is nothing in this world that is in Paradise, except names'*.

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[236] i.e. concerning the Prophet (ﷺ).

[237] Sūrah al-Tawbah (9):128.

[238] Sūrah al-Nisā' (4):58.

[239] Sūrah al-Insān (76):2.

The presence of these realities in Paradise, of which Allāh has informed us about, do not resemble those present in this world, in the sense that what is permissible for the former be permissible for the latter, what is a must for this be a must for that, what cannot be for this cannot be for that, that the constitution of this be the constitution of that and that what is not possible for this be not possible for that.

For we know that the water of Paradise does not spoil or become brackish. The taste of it's milk does not change, it's wine does not overcome the drinker or weaken his mind, its water does not spring out of earth nor does it descend from clouds as is the case in this world. Its milk is not created from cattle as in this world and so on.

Thus, if a particular creation agrees with another in name, and there is between them a shared value and similarity, what we are addressed with will be understood, even though the reality of the first is not the reality of the second.

Consequently, The Creator (*jalla jalāluhu*) is further removed from any similarity to His creation than that which is in Paradise is to that in this world. If He therefore, describes Himself that He is Living, Knowledgeable, the Hearer, Seer and Able, it does not mean that He is like His creation, as His distance from any likeness to His creation is greater than the distance of dissimilarity found between the different type of creations. Every small animal has strength, power and activity, and yet this does not resemble the creation of the Angels, so how can something of creation resemble the Lord of the worlds?"[240]

Four: An explanation of this point from a language perspective, then from the angle of the *Sharī'ah*.

It is difficult for some to comprehend the fact that Allāh named Himself with certain Attributes and then named His servants with similar attributes. The person then becomes confused, does he affirm for Allāh the reality of those Attributes or not?

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[240] Abridged; *Risālah Fī al-'Aql wa al-Rūḥ* of Ibn Taymiyyah, 2/42-43, published within the compilation *Majmū'ah al-Rasā'il al-Munīriyyah*.

In order to clarify this issue, may Allāh give you success, know that words are of categories[241]. A word can be (in relation to another):

(i) A Synonym (*Mutarādif*): words that differ in their spelling, but are the same in meaning.

An example of this is the words, *asad*, *usāmah* and *ghadhanfar*. These words differ in their letter construction but all carry the same meaning[242], so they are termed *synonyms*.

(ii) A Homograph (*Mushtarik*): words that are spelt the same but which possess different meanings.

An example of this is the word *'ayn*. This word can mean, eye, fountain, spy or envy.

So the wording is one, but the meanings carried are different, such words are termed homographs[243].

(iii) Dissimilar (*Mutabāyin*): words that differ in their spelling and meaning.

Examples of this are the words, heaven, earth, paradise, and hell.

Each of these words carries a different meaning, so they are termed dissimilar.

(iv) (*Mutawāti'*): words that agree in spelling and meaning.

This is of two types:

> (a) (*Al-Tawātu' al-Muṭlaq*[244]), this is so if the meaning is equal in all.

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[241] Two factors make up the perspective of this particular categorisation: (1) the meaning of the word and (2) the spelling of the word, therefore giving four permutations. [t]

[242] i.e. they all mean lion. [t]

[243] An example in the English language would be the word *bill* as in a charge for a service or product and the word *bill* as in the beak of a bird. The words are not related and thus appear as two different entries in a dictionary. [t]

[244] *Al-Muṭlaq*: Absolute, i.e. when the meaning it signifies is absolute. [t]

An example of this is the word *rajul* (man). One says, 'Zayd is a man and 'Umar is a man'. So, the meaning (i.e. manhood) is the same throughout.

(b) (*Al-Tawātu' al-Mushakkak*), this is so if the meaning varies and takes on different shades. It was termed *Mushakkak* (i.e. uncertain), because of the confusion that arises when one hears this word: is it from the category of *Mutawāti'* or from the category of homograph words?

An example of this is the word *nūr* (light). One says, 'The light of the sun and the light of the lamp'. The (basic) meaning in both is one, but there is a difference of level and superiority between the two[245]. For the light of the Sun is very different from the light of the lamp.

The names, which are used for Allāh and for the servants are from this type, *al-Tawātu' al-Mushakkak* words.

The truth in this matter is therefore, with respect to the Names and Attributes that are used for Allāh and His servants, like (the names) the living, hearer, seer, knower, able and (the attributes) life, hearing, sight, knowledge and so on, they are true for the Lord and true for the servant.

However, for the Lord, they befit His Majesty and for the servant, they befit him.

The reason for this is that the name or attribute pertaining to this type has three standings:

1. The viewpoint that does not take into account, who it is ascribed to, whether it be the Lord (*tabāraka wa ta'āla*) or the servant.
2. The viewpoint of when it is described to the Lord and specific to Him.
3. The viewpoint of when it described to the servant and restricted to him.

[245] As well as a difference of reality. [t]

So, that which is a necessity of the word in itself and is of its own reality[246], is affirmed for the Lord and the servant. The Lord has of it that which befits His perfection and the servant has of it that which befits him.

An example is the name *al-Samīʿ* (the hearer), which necessitates grasping the audible. Likewise, *al-Basīr* (the seer), which necessitates seeing the visual. The same is the case for *al-ʿAlīm* (the Knower), *al-Qadīr* (The able) and so on for the rest of the Names.

Indeed, the condition for using such names correctly is that their meanings and realities are found within the one depicted with these names[247].

Whatever is inherently part of the Name can therefore be affirmed for Allāh, there being no objection in that at all, rather, this is affirmed for Allāh in a manner that does not entail any likeness or similitude to His creation.

One who negates this from Allāh under the pretence that these names have been used for creation, actually commits *ilhād*[248] in Allāh's Names and denies His Attributes of perfection.

One who affirms them in a way that does not resemble creation but that befits His Majesty and Glory, frees himself from the dung of *tashbīh* and poison of *taʿṭīl*, and this is the way of *Ahl al-Sunnah*.

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[246] i.e. the first viewpoint. [t]

[247] i.e. one does not name a chair for example, the hearer, as the meaning carried within this name is not present in the chair. We can see now the fallacy and deviation of those such as the *Muʿtazilah* who affirm for Allāh Names but not Attributes and conclude by saying, 'Allāh is the Hearer without hearing!' [t]

[248] *Ilḥād* (to incline and digress) in Allāh's Names and Attributes means to depart and digress from the established truth concerning them, their realities and meanings to *shirk*, *taʿṭīl* and *kufr*. Some scholars mention five categories of this type of *Ilḥād*: (1) To name Allāh with names that do not befit His Majesty and Glory. (2) To name creation with Allāh's Names. (3) To describe Him with matters that He is exalted of and above. (4) To commit *taʿṭīl* of the meanings embodied within Allāh's Names and deny their reality and (5) To liken His Attributes to those of His creation. Refer to *al-Kawāshif al-Jaliyyah*, p. 95. [t]

As for that which is part of the attribute as a result of its attachment to the servant, then it is a must that one negates this from Allāh, like the necessities of sleep, slumber and need for nourishment which are related to the attribute of life for the servant. Likewise, the necessities that are connected to his intention such as his own movement towards acquiring what will benefit him and warding off anything that can harm him. Again, the necessities associated to his elevation such as a need of the thing he is above and the fact that he is carried by it.

All of this has to be negated from the Holy One, the One free of all defects.

As for that which is part of the Attribute as a result of its particular attachment to Allāh (*ta'āla*), it is not affirmed for creation in any way, like the fact that His Knowledge necessitates eternity, obligation and full comprehension[249]. Likewise, His Capability, Desire and all other Attributes; all that is specific to Him with regard to these Attributes cannot be affirmed for creation.

If you grasp this principle and understand it as it should be, you will free yourself from the two destructive elements that form the basis of the plague of the *Mutakallimūn*: *ta'ṭīl* and *tashbīh*.

If you truly give this matter its rightful apprehension, you will truly affirm for Allāh the most beautiful Names and the most exalted Attributes, thereby escaping from *ta'ṭīl*, and you will negate from these Names and Attributes everything specific to creation as well as any resemblance, thereby escaping from *tashbīh*. Reflect on this and make

[249] i.e. Allāh's Attribute of Knowledge has never ceased to exist as opposed to man's knowledge for he himself let alone his knowledge was not in existence before his creation. Likewise, the depiction of Allāh as having Knowledge is an obligation in itself as the Lord and Deity cannot be but Knowledgeable, contrary to a particular creation. Again, Allāh's Knowledge is all-comprehensive, nothing escapes Him for He knows of the things that have occurred, that which is occurring and that which will occur. He also knows of them before they occur and He also knows of the things that did not occur and how they would have occurred if they did (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*). Such necessities of His Knowledge are specific to Him and the creation does not take a share of them, when one of them is described as being knowledgeable. [t]

it your shield, which you go back to in this domain, and Allāh is the One who grants success towards what is correct.[250]

Amidst the discussions of Shaykh al-Islām on this topic is his saying: "Allāh has given Himself Names and He has given Names to his Attributes. These Names are specific to Him when they are described to Him none takes a share in them alongside Him.

He named some of His creation with names specific to them which are attached to them, these names agree with those Names (i.e. Allāh's Names) when they are not described and specified.

The agreement of the two (particular) names and correspondence and union of the named when the name is unrestricted and not attached or specified[251] does not necessitate an agreement between the named or correspondence of the named when attached and specified, let alone for the named to be similar when attached or specified.

Allāh has named Himself ' the Living':

ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ٱلْحَىُّ ٱلْقَيُّومُ

> **"Allāh, none has the right to be worshipped but He, (*al-Ḥayy*) the Living, the Self-Sustainer and Supporter of all..."[252]**

He has also named some of His slaves as 'the living':

يُخْرِجُ ٱلْحَىَّ مِنَ ٱلْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ ٱلْمَيِّتَ مِنَ ٱلْحَىِّ

> **"He brings out (*al-Ḥayy*) the living from the dead, and brings out the dead from (*al-Ḥayy*) the living..."[253]**

However, this 'living' is not like that 'Living'. This is because His saying, **'...the Living...'** is a name specific to Him, and His saying, **'He**

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[250] *Badā'i' al-Fawā'id*, 1/164,166.

[251] i.e. the agreement between the named (i.e. Allāh and His creation) in sharing the intrinsic necessities of the name or attribute. The first viewpoint discussed earlier... [t]

[252] Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):255.

[253] Sūrah al-Rūm (30):19.

brings out the living from the dead…' is a name for the living creation, which is specific to it.

These names only agree if they are used unrestrictedly and are not made specific. However, an absolute and unrestricted sense does not correlate to anything named outside[254], but the mind understands from this a common measure between the two that are named.

Whereas upon specification it restricts it to what distinguishes the Creator from creation and what distinguishes creation from the Creator.

This is the same with respect to all of Allāh's Names and Attributes.

The indications given as a result of *al-Tatāwu'* and agreement are understood, as well as the indications denoted as a result of appropriation and specification, which prevent creation from sharing characteristics specific to the Creator (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*).

Allāh has also named Himself:

عَلِيمًا حَلِيمًا

"…('*Alīm*) Knower and (*Ḥalīm*) Forbearing".[255]

He also named a slave of His as 'forbearing':

فَبَشَّرْنَٰهُ بِغُلَٰمٍ حَلِيمٍ

"…so we gave him glad tidings of a (*ḥalīm*) forbearing son".

Allāh refers here to Ismā'īl.

He named another, knowledgeable:

وَبَشَّرُوهُ بِغُلَٰمٍ عَلِيمٍ

[254] i.e. outside one's mind and heart. The only place an attribute such as knowledge can exist by itself i.e. in an absolute sense, is in one's mind and heart. For it to exist outside, it has to be ascribed to an essence and if you ascribe it to an essence, e.g., Knowledge of Allāh or knowledge of man, you have therefore specified it and hence, the attribute takes on its appropriate reality depending on the essence it is ascribed to… one can now easily see the falsity of the claim that the affirmation of Allāh's Attributes has to signify *tashbīh*. [t]

[255] Sūrah al-Aḥzāb (33):51.

"...and we gave him glad tidings of a (*'alīm*) knowledgeable son".

Here, Allāh refers to Isḥāq.

The knowledgeable (in the first *āyah*) is not like the knowledgeable (in the second) and the forbearing (in the first *āyah*) is not like the forbearing (in the second).

Allāh also names Himself, 'Hearer, Seer':

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًۢا بَصِيرًا

"...Truly, Allāh is ever (*Samī'*) Hearer, (*Baṣīr*) Seer".[256]

He also named some of His creation, 'hearer, seer':

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَـٰنَ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَّبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَـٰهُ سَمِيعًۢا بَصِيرًا

"Verily, We have created man from drops of mixed semen, in order to try him, so We made him (*samī'*) hearer, (*baṣīr*) seer".[257]

This hearer is not like that hearer, nor is this seer like that seer...

Furthermore, He gave Names to His Attributes and He named Attributes of His creation with those same names. He says:

وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَىْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِۦٓ إِلَّا بِمَا شَآءَ

"...and they will never encompass anything of His (*'ilm*) Knowledge except which He wills..."[258]

أَنزَلَهُۥ بِعِلْمِهِۦ

"...He has sent it down with His (*'ilm*) Knowledge..."[259]

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ ٱلرَّزَّاقُ ذُو ٱلْقُوَّةِ ٱلْمَتِينُ

"Verily, Allāh is the All-Provider, Owner of (*quwwah*) Power, the Most Strong".[260]

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[256] Sūrah al-Nisā' (4):58.

[257] Sūrah al-Insān (76):2.

[258] Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):255.

[259] Sūrah al-Nisā' (4):166.

[260] Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt (51):58.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً

"Do they not see that Allāh, the One who created them, is Mightier than them in (*quwwah*) Strength.."[261]

He named Attributes of His creation as 'knowledge and power':

وَمَآ أُوتِيتُم مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٥﴾

"...and you have not been given of ('*ilm*) knowledge except a little".[262]

وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِى عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ

"...but over all those endowed with ('*ilm*) knowledge, is an All-Knowing One".[263]

He says:

فَرِحُوا۟ بِمَا عِندَهُم مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ

"...they rejoiced at what they had of ('*ilm*) knowledge..."[264]

He says:

ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُم مِّن ضَعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنۢ
بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَةً

"Allāh is He who created you in weakness, then gave you (*quwwah*) strength after weakness, then after (*quwwah*) strength gave you weakness and grey hair..."[265]

He also says:

وَيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً إِلَىٰ قُوَّتِكُمْ

"...and (He will) add (*quwwah*) strength to your (*quwwah*) strength..."[266]

[261] Sūrah al-Fuṣṣilāt (41):15.

[262] Sūrah al-Isrā' (17):85.

[263] Sūrah Yūsuf (12):76.

[264] Sūrah Ghāfir (40):83.

[265] Sūrah al-Rūm (30):54.

[266] Sūrah Hūd (11):52.

This knowledge is not like that Knowledge and this strength is not like that Strength.

He described Himself as having ascended above the Throne. He mentions this in seven places in His Book, that is, the fact that He ascended above the Throne.

He described some of His creation with ascension above something, like in His saying:

لِتَسْتَوُۥا۟ عَلَىٰ ظُهُورِهِۦ

"In order that you ascend above their backs..."[267]

His saying:

فَإِذَا ٱسْتَوَيْتَ أَنتَ وَمَن مَّعَكَ عَلَى ٱلْفُلْكِ

"And when you and those with you have ascended on the ship..."[268]

His saying:

وَٱسْتَوَتْ عَلَى ٱلْجُودِىِّ

"...and it ascended on (Mount) Jūdi..."[269]

This ascension (of creation) is not like that Ascension (of the Creator).

He described Himself that His two Hands are outstretched, saying:

بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَآءُ

"...Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched, He spends as He Wills..."[270]

He also described some of His creation with outstretched hands, saying:

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ ٱلْبَسْطِ

[267] Sūrah al-Zukhruf (43):13.

[268] Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23):28.

[269] Sūrah Hūd (11):44.

[270] Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5):64.

> **"And let not your hand be tied to your neck (like a miser), nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach (like a spendthrift)..."**[271]

This hand is not like that Hand, nor is this 'stretching out' like that 'Stretching Out'. If the meaning of (*bast*) 'stretching out' is giving and generosity, then the Giving by Allāh is not like the giving by His creation, nor is His Generosity like theirs; examples of this are numerous.

Consequently, one must affirm for Allāh that which He affirmed for Himself and negate any likeness to His creation.

Whoever asserts, 'Allāh has no Knowledge, Power, Mercy, Speech, and He does not Love, become Pleased, nor Called Out, Saved and Ascended', is a *mu'attil*, denier and one who compares Allāh to the non-existent and lifeless.

One who asserts, 'He has Knowledge like my knowledge, Power like my power, Love like my love, Pleasure like my pleasure, and He has two Hands like my two hands and Ascension like my ascension', is a *mushabbih* and one who compares Allāh to animals.

Rather, the obligation is (*ithbāt*) affirmation without any (*tamthīl*) resemblance, and (*tanzīh*) elevation without any (*ta'ṭīl*) nullification".[272]

Five: The decisive factor that sets apart the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah* in this foundation from the belief of the people of *al-Ta'ṭīl* and people of *Tamthīl*.

The commentator of *al-Tahāwiyyah*[273] states: "*Ahl al-Sunnah* agree that there is not a thing like Allāh, not like His Essence, His Attributes, nor His Actions.

However, the word *tashbīh* has evolved, within the discourse of people, to be an obscure word. One intends by it:

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[271] Sūrah al-Isrā' (17):29.

[272] *Al-Risālah al-Tadmuriyyah*, page 8-12, abridged.

[273] i.e. Ibn Abī al-'Izz al-Ḥanafi, may Allāh have mercy upon him, who wrote a commentary for the doctrines of *Ahl al-Sunnah* laid out by Imām al-Ṭahāwi. This book is known as *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Ṭahāwiyyah*. *Al-'Aqīdah al-Ṭahāwiyyah* itself has in fact many commentaries, but none on the par of this specific one. [t]

1. The correct meaning: which is that the characteristics specific to Allāh are not used to depict anyone of His creation, and that nothing of His creation resembles any Attributes of His. This is what the Qur'ān has shown, Allāh (*ta'āla*) says, **'...There is nothing like unto Him...'** This is a refutation of the *Mumaththilah* and *Mushabbihah*.

   Hence, one who asserts that the Attributes of The Creator are like that of His creation is a *Mushabbih*, falsifier and despised. One who declares the attributes of creation to be like the Attributes of the Creator is similar to the Christians in their disbelief.

2. The rejected meaning: the intended meaning imparted is that no Attributes are affirmed for Allāh. One therefore, does not say, 'He has Ability, Knowledge or Life' because the servant is depicted with these attributes. The implication of this position is to also not assert that Allāh is 'The Living, Knower or Able' because the servant also possesses such names. Likewise, with regard to Allāh's Speech, Hearing, Sight, Will and so on.

   The origin of this error and blunder traces back to their presumption that with regard to these general and absolute names, the general and absolute that is named with them is the very thing that is affirmed for the particular thing (being named). However, this is not the case for that particular thing, since what is present outside (of one's mind and heart) cannot be absolute and unqualified, rather, there only exists that which is particular and specific.

   These names, if Allāh is named with them, will be specific and distinct to Him and if the servant is named with them, will be specific to him.

   The presence of Allāh and His Life is not shared with anyone else. In fact, the presence of a particular creation is not shared with any other (creation), so how will it fare with the presence of the Creator?

In light of this fact and others, it will become clear to you that the *Mushabbihah* took on this meaning, added to the truth and consequently deviated.

The *Mu'attilah* held on to negation of resemblance from a particular angle, added to the truth and consequently deviated.

Whereas, the Book of Allāh points towards the pure truth that the sound correct minds comprehend, which is the balanced truth that does not contain any deviation.[274]

THE THIRD FOUNDATION: TO RELINQUISH ALL HOPE OF COMPREHENDING HOW ALLĀH IS ACTUALLY CHARACTERISED BY THOSE ATTRIBUTES.

The following points clarify this foundation:

One: Allāh has not afforded His creation any knowledge or sight of His Essence nor did He make knowledge of that incumbent upon them

Allāh (*'azza wa jalla*) did not will to make a way for His servants towards knowing the reality and designation of His Attributes. Allāh (*subḥānahu*) has sealed the ways towards this.

From one angle, He did not show His essence to them, this door is sealed until the establishment of the Hour, as reported in the *ḥadīth*: *"Know that none of you will see your Lord until you die"*.

From a second angle, Allāh did not inform us in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger of the reality and actual designation of His Attributes. What the texts reveal is the affirmation of the presence of those Attributes, not the affirmation of the descriptive designation of those Attributes.

Yet from a third angle, He did not make it incumbent upon them to know the nature of His Attributes. He did not make this a form of worship of Him or desire that from them. Rather, He restricted them

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[274] *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Ṭaḥāwiyyah*, pg. 104, abridged.

to possessing *īmān* in that which He informed them of. The obligation therefore, is for them to possess correct belief of that which they have been made liable for and not to exceed these boundaries.

The texts have related the obligation of relinquishing all hope of comprehending how Allāh is actually characterised by those Attributes, as comprehending that is impossible. Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِۦ عِلْمًا ﴿١١٠﴾

"He knows what happens to them (i.e. His creation) in this world, and what will happen to them (in the Hereafter), and they do not encompass any knowledge of Him".[275]

Shaykh al-Amīn al-Shanqīṭī, may Allāh have mercy upon him, says:

"Comprehending the reality of the nature is impossible. This is what has been specified in this *āyah* of Sūrah Ṭāhā: His statement, 'they do not [يحيطون] *encompass* any knowledge of Him', is a verb (i.e. encompass) of the present tense, and the verb that is *al-Sinā'ī*, which is represented by the present tense, command, and past tense verbs, ascribes itself according to the grammarians to both a (*masdar*) verbal noun and (*zaman*) time. This verbal noun is embodied in its meaning by consensus. Thus, '(they) encompass' has in its meaning [الإحَاطَة] 'encompassing'. The negation [لا] therefore, prevails over the verbal noun that is concealed within this verb, whereby the verb becomes with the negation like an indefinite word that is (*mabnī,* uninflected) built upon the vowel point *fathah* [لا إِحَاطَةَ][276]. Hence, the meaning becomes 'there is no encompassing for human knowledge of the Lord of the Heavens and Earth'. The entire genus of all types of encompassing is therefore negated from the reality of the Attributes. The encompassing connected to knowledge is thus negated with respect to the Lord of the worlds."[277]

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[275] Sūrah Ṭāhā (20):110.

[276] This is known as the لا of absolute negation. [t]

[277] *Manhaj wa Dirāsāt Li Āyāt al-Asmā wa al-Ṣifāt*, p. 24.

Two: Limitation of the mind on fathoming the nature of Allāh's Attributes

The mind is compelled to give up any hope of grasping the reality and designation of the Attributes because of its incapability of acquiring such knowledge.

The reason being, that knowledge of the reality of the Attributes of something cannot be attained, except by first having knowledge of its essence, or of something similar to it or by truthful information. All these ways are not possible with regard to the nature of Allāh's Attributes. To try and put forward any designation is therefore futile and false.

Man's knowledge is limited just as Allāh has informed us of that when He said:

وَمَآ أُوتِيتُم مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٥﴾

> **"...and you have not been given of knowledge except a little".[278]**

Allāh (*ta'āla*) also says:

وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَىْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِۦٓ إِلَّا بِمَا شَآءَ

> **"...and they will never encompass anything of His knowledge except which He wills..."[279]**

If the person's soul, which is the nearest thing to him or is in fact his essence, does not know of its reality and cannot grasp any knowledge of its true nature, then lack of knowledge of the reality and true nature of the Creator (*jalla jalāluhu*) will be even more so.

Allāh has disciplined and taught His believing servants, and directed them to not delve into issues of which they have no knowledge. He said:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِۦ عِلْمٌ
إِنَّ ٱلسَّمْعَ وَٱلْبَصَرَ وَٱلْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْـُٔولًا ﴿٣٦﴾

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[278] Sūrah al-Isrā' (17):85.

[279] Sūrah al-Baqarah (2):255.

"And do not follow that which you have no knowledge of. Verily, the hearing, the sight and the heart, each of those will be questioned".[280]

Allāh (*ta'āla*) also says:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ ٱلْفَوَٰحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا
بَطَنَ وَٱلْإِثْمَ وَٱلْبَغْىَ بِغَيْرِ ٱلْحَقِّ وَأَن تُشْرِكُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِۦ
سُلْطَٰنًا وَأَن تَقُولُوا۟ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

"Say, 'The things that my Lord has forbidden are evil sins, whether committed openly or secretly, sins, unrighteous oppression, joining partners with Allāh for which He has given no authority, and saying things about Allāh of which you have know knowledge".[281]

It is very clear that we do not possess any knowledge with respect to the reality of His Attributes (*'azza wa jalla*) because He (*ta'āla*) informed us of these Attributes but did not inform us of their reality. The delving into and attachment to the issue of their true nature on our part will therefore be chasing after that which we have no knowledge, an assertion on a matter that is impossible for us to comprehend and a contravention of that which Allāh has forbidden us from, warned us against, and deemed unlawful for us.

Thus, one must not commit *takyīf*, whether it is in one's heart, upon one's tongue or by one's limbs, because Allāh is Greater and more Majestic than any form of designation estimated by the mind. Furthermore, this designation will be a lie upon Allāh, as its maintainer has no knowledge of that.

This is why those who specialised in explaining the beliefs of groups and sects, related on some of the *Mushabbihah* –who delved into the issue of the nature of Allāh's Attributes- that they held five different positions regarding their Lord in one year alone[282]. Allāh has indeed spoken the truth when He said in His Mighty Book:

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[280] Sūrah al-Isrā' (17):36.

[281] Sūrah al-A'rāf (7):33.

[282] *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyīn*, p. 33.

وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِندِ غَيْرِ ٱللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا۟ فِيهِ ٱخْتِلَٰفًا كَثِيرًا

> **"...Had it been from other than Allāh, they would surely have found therein much contradiction".**[283]

It is upon the Muslim to be wary of *takyīf* and of trying to commit it, as one who does such, falls into a ditch from which he cannot escape. Delving into this is something that Shaytān casts into the hearts and is from his whispers. Accordingly, the believer must retreat and seek refuge with his Lord from the whispers of Shaytān, Allāh (*ta'āla*) says:

وَإِمَّا يَنزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ
ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَٱسْتَعِذْ بِٱللَّهِ إِنَّهُۥ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

> **"And if an evil whisper comes to you from *Shaytān*, then seek refuge with Allāh. Verily, He is All-Hearer, All-Knower."**[284]

Three: The understanding behind the statement of the *Salaf*, 'without any *kayf*'

The meaning of the statement of *Ahl al-Sunnah 'without any takyīf'* i.e. without a designation that man can grasp. This does not mean that *Ahl al-Sunnah* negate any qualitative designation outright, as everything in existence must be upon a certain reality and nature. The meaning behind this statement is that they negate any knowledge of this true nature since none knows the reality of His Essence and Attributes except Him, Himself (*subḥānahu*).[285]

This is something that Allāh has kept to His Own Knowledge, so there is no way to arrive at this. Just as the Essence of Allāh is something of which man has no knowledge regarding its reality, likewise, the reality of His (*subḥānahu*) Attributes are not known.

For this reason, when Imām Mālik was questioned:

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[283] Sūrah al-Nisā' (4):82.

[284] Sūrah al-A'rāf (7):200.

[285] *Sharh al-'Aqīdah al-Wāsitiyyah*, page 21. [The *sharḥ* of al-Harrās]

ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنُ عَلَى ٱلۡعَرۡشِ ٱسۡتَوَىٰ ﴿٥﴾

"The Most Beneficent ascended above the Throne"[286]

'How did He Ascend?'

He, may Allāh have mercy upon him, replied 'The Ascension is understood, *how*, is not known, *īmān* in it is obligatory and questioning it is an innovation. I see you as only an evil person.' He then ordered his expulsion from the gathering.

The statement 'The Ascension is not unknown and how is incomprehensible' has also been reported by Imām Mālik's Shaykh, Rabī'ah Ibn 'Abdur-Raḥmān.

This is the position taken for all the Attributes. The people of knowledge have adopted this scale and held it to be one of the fundamental principles related to the issue of the Attributes.

The statement of Imām Mālik, 'The ascension is understood' i.e. its meaning is understood in the language of the Arabs. The word '*istiwā*' has been made transitive by the particle '*alā*, so it's meaning here is, to ascend and rise.

This applies to the rest of the texts that contain mention of the Attributes, their meanings are well known in the language of the Arabs and are not ambiguous.

(*how*, is not known) i.e. with their affirmation of the meaning of *istiwā* and belief that Allāh ascended above His Throne, they however, entrust the knowledge of the nature of that Ascension back to Allāh ('*azza wa jalla*), because it is something He has kept to Himself.

(*īmān* in it is obligatory) i.e. *īmān* in the Ascension of Allāh above His Throne is a truth and is obligatory, because of its mention in the texts of the Sharī'ah.

(and questioning it is an innovation) i.e. to question the *nature* of the Ascension, this is because the questioner asked, '*how* did He ascend?'

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[286] Sūrah Ṭāhā (20):5.

Four: Ignorance of the reality does not undermine *īmān* in the Attributes or knowledge of their meanings.

The lack of knowledge of the nature of Allāh's Attributes does not undermine *īmān* in these Attributes nor does it invalidate the knowledge of their meanings, as the issue of qualification is (an additional matter) beyond this.

The *Salaf* affirm for Allāh the Attributes of Perfection as He has affirmed for Himself, they understand the meanings of those Attributes and provide explanation of them.

Hence, when they affirm for Allāh Hearing and Sight, they affirm for them their true existence and understand their meanings. This is the same for the rest of the Attributes. It is mandatory to view them in this light, even though, there is no way for us to know their reality and true nature, as Allāh (*subḥānahu*) did not make this incumbent upon the slaves, He did not desire that from them and nor did He grant them a way to that.

Allāh did not bestow upon His slaves a way to understanding the reality of many types of His creation. Take the case of the souls of creation that are the closest of all things to them, the knowledge of their reality and nature has been hidden from them. In addition, Allāh has informed us of the details of the Day of Standing and of what is in Paradise and the Fire. These realities settled in the hearts of the people and their minds bore witness to it, but they did not know of their true reality and nature. So the Muslims have no doubt that in Paradise there are Rivers of Wine and Rivers of Honey, but they do not comprehend the actuality, constitution and nature of that as Ibn 'Abbās has said: "There is nothing in this world that is in Paradise, except names".

The case is the same for the names and attributes, the non-existence of their like in this world does not prevent one from knowing their meanings, that they truly exist, and from possessing *īmān* in them and believing that Allāh is characterised with them.

Our *īmān* therefore is correct with regard to what we have been made

liable for, even though we do not comprehend the reality and true essence, and Allāh knows best of His own reality.

It is obligatory to adhere to all of these three foundations without breaching any one of them.

This is what the belief of the *Salaf* of this *ummah* was upon including those who traversed their path.

As a result, they adopted a middle position, between two groups that deviated in this domain: the *Mu'aṭṭilah* and the *Mushabbihah*.

To conclude, the belief of the *Salaf* is one of (*ithbāt*) affirmation without *tashbīh* and (*tanzīh*) exaltation without *ta'ṭīl*.

They do not negate what Allāh has named or described Himself with in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger (ﷺ), which would result in invalidating His most beautiful Names and most exalted Attributes, changing the words from their proper places and committing *ilhād* in His Names and *āyāt* as did the *Mu'aṭṭilah*.

Likewise, they do not liken the Attributes of the Creator to the attributes of His creation as did the *Mushabbihah*.

Conclusion

The religion of Allāh (*ta'āla*) lies between extremism and negligence. Moderation is none other than to adopt the upright path between the two.

The religion of Islām is at the centre between two antagonistic sides. The Muslims are at the middle between people of all denominations.

They lie at the centre in the area of *tawḥīd* between the Jews and Christians.

The Jews depict the Lord (*ta'āla*) with attributes of imperfection that are specific to creation and they compare the Creator to creation. They say that He is a miser, He is poor and that when He created the Heavens and earth, He tired.

He (*subḥānahu*) is The Generous Who is not miserly, The Rich Who is not in need of anyone and the Omnipotent who is not touched by weariness.

The Christians depict creation with Attributes specific to the Creator and compare the creation to the Creator. They say that Allāh is *al-Masīh* Ibn Maryam, that Allāh is the third of the three and they say that *al-Masīh* is the son of Allāh. They take their monks, leaders and *al-Masīh* Ibn Maryam as Lords besides Allāh. They were specifically ordered to worship Allāh, One Deity, none has the right to be worshipped except He, Exalted and Elevated He is above that which they associate.

Thus, the Muslims singled Allāh out, described Him with Attributes of Perfection, Elevated Him above all attributes of imperfection and Exalted Him from attributes of His creation being like His. He is characterised with Attributes of Perfection, not attributes of imperfection and there is nothing like Him, not in His Essence, His Attributes or Actions.

The Muslims also adopt the middle position in the area of Prophethood.

The Jews killed some of the Prophets, were too proud to follow them, declared them false and accused them of major sins.

The Christians declare those who are not Prophets and Messengers as Prophets and Messengers, like their belief regarding the disciples, they say that they are Messengers. In fact, they obey their monks and leaders in the same manner Prophets are to be obeyed.

Thus, the Christians give credit and believe in falsehood and the Jews reject and deny the truth.

As for the area of legislation, the Jews deem that it is not possible for the Creator to send a Messenger with legislation differing with that of the first Messenger and assert, 'It is not possible for Him to abrogate what He has legislated.'

The Christians permit their monks to change and modify the legislation that Allāh had sent His Messenger with.

Thus, the Jews declare the Creator incapable and prevent the requisites of His Ability with regard to the issues of prophethood and legislation.

The Christians allow creation to change that which the Creator has legislated, thereby equating creation to the Creator.

Likewise, in the area of worship, the Jews turn away from worshipping even on a Saturday, when Allāh commanded them to devote all their time solely for His worship. They instead, are occupied with their desires.

The Christians worship Allāh with innovations they construed, of which Allāh had not sent down any authority.

Thus, the Jews are too proud to worship and the Christians associate Him in worship.

The Muslims worshipped Allāh alone with that which He legislated and they did not worship Him with innovations.

This is the religion of Islām, which Allāh has sent all His Messengers with. It is the submission of the slave to Allāh and none other. This is the pure and upright way, the religion of Ibrāhim. One who submits to Allāh and other than Him is a *mushrik* and one who does not submit to Allāh is an arrogant and haughty one.

The case is similar concerning the lawful and unlawful, such as food, clothing and the matters that pertain to it such as impurities.

The Jews declared unlawful the good and pure things, which had been made lawful for them. They declare unlawful the good that is of benefit to the people, and they avoid clean matters that have (certain) impurities. They do not for example, eat with the woman during her menses, nor sit with her. They are bound and shackled in fetters, which they are punished with.

The Christians do not declare unlawful that which Allāh and His Messenger declare unlawful. They make the prohibited impurities lawful, such as the dead animal (which is not slaughtered), blood and pig-meat. They even worship in an impure state, with urine and faeces, they do not bathe themselves when sexually defiled, nor do they clean themselves for prayer. In their view, the more a monk is further removed from a state of hygiene and is clothed with filth, the loftier his status is amongst them.[287]

Ahl al-Sunnah in Islām, have in a similar way adopted the middle and balanced path in all affairs. *Ahl al-Sunnah* in Islām are like the people of Islām with regard to the religions.

Ahl al-Sunnah are upon a middle path in many issues of belief, the following is a selection of these issues:

1. The Names and Attributes of Allāh:

The position of the *Salaf* is one of affirmation and employing them and understanding them according to their apparent meaning, as well as negating any *takyīf* or *tashbīh*. As a result, they have reached a mid-

[287] *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, 5/ 168, 172.

dle path between the *Mu'aṭṭilah*, who negated them and invalidated that which Allāh and His Messenger affirmed and between the *Mushabbihah*, who took them to a level of *tashbīh* and *takyīf*.

2. The actions of Allāh, al-Qadar:

The position of the *Salaf* is that they affirm for Allāh Action and Will and they affirm for the slave action and will, which is confined by the Will of Allāh and His Ability. They therefore, adopt a middle path between the *Jabariyyah* who deny the ability and will of the slave and between the *Qadariyyah* who deny the Ability of Allāh with regard to the actions of the slaves.

3. *Al-Īmān*:

The position of the *Salaf* is that *īmān* consists of belief, speech and action, and that it increases and decreases. Thus, they are at a middle position between the *Murji'ah* who do not hold that actions are part of *īmān* itself and the *Khawārij* and *Mu'tazilah* who denied the fact that *īmān* increases and decreases.

4. The threats of punishment by Allāh, i.e. with regard to the one who commits a major sin.

The position of the *Salaf* is that the one who commits a major sin is a believer because of his *īmān* and a *fāsiq* because of his disobedience, and that he is deserving of the threat, but under the Will of Allāh. If Allāh Wills, He punishes him in proportion to his sin and will then take him out of the Fire or if He Wills, He will forgive Him and place him into Paradise.

As a result, they take a middle stance between the extremists such as the *Murji'ah*, who declare that *īmān* is not affected by sins and nor is *kufr* affected by obedience and between the *Wā'īdiyyah* (The *Khawārij* and *Mu'tazilah*). The *Khawārij* hold that he (i.e. the one who commits a major sin) is a unbeliever in this world and the *Mu'tazilah* hold that he is on a level between the two levels[288], and with regard to the

[288] i.e. he is neither a believer and nor is he an unbeliever! [t]

Hereafter, they both agree that he will abide forever in the Fire.

5. The Messenger of Allāh's (ﷺ) Companions:

The position of the *Salaf* is one of acknowledgement of the excellence of the Companions. That they are the most complete of this *ummah* in terms of *īmān*, Islām, knowledge and wisdom and that they are all honest and righteous by the testimonial of Allāh. However, *Ahl al-Sunnah* are not extreme with them, nor do they believe that they are infallible. Rather, they give them their rights and love them because of the great precedence they hold, the astounding trial and tribulation they suffered in aiding Islām and their Jihād with the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ).

Ahl al-Sunnah have thus, adopted a middle path between the *Rāfiḍah* and the *Khawārij*. The *Rāfiḍah* (may Allāh disgrace them) revile and curse the Companions. Some of them may even declare some or all of the Companions as unbelievers. As for the extreme among them, despite the fact that they curse many of the Companions and amongst them the *Khulafā*, they are excessive with regard to 'Alī and his offspring, and regard them to be divine.

The *Khawārij* complemented these *Rāfiḍah* and declared 'Alī, Mu'āwiyah and those with them as unbelievers, they fought them and declared their blood and wealth as lawful.

The purpose here is to demonstrate that *Ahl al-Sunnah* are the most knowledgeable of the truth. Hence, regarding every group besides *Ahl al-Sunnah* and *Ḥadīth*, the followers of the narrations of the Messengers of Allāh, any of these groups that differ with *Ahl al-Sunnah*, then their position is an incorrect one. They always separate from *Ahl al-sunnah* with a position that is false.

The more one is further away from the Sunnah, the more false will be the statements and actions he specifically has.

Thus, the fortunate one is the one who adheres to the Sunnah, and Allāh is the One Who grants success and He is the One Who guides towards the way of right conduct.

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TAWḤĪD OF ALLĀH'S

Most Beautiful Names & Lofty Attributes

THE BELIEF OF AHL AL-SUNNAH WA L-JAMĀ'AH

Among the subjects that have not been adequately covered in the English language, perhaps the most important of them is the one covered in the pages of this book, *tawḥīd* of Allāh's Most Beautiful Names and Lofty Attributes, the knowledge regarding Allāh, the most High, Himself.

The author presents the belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah*, which is the creed of the first few generations of Muslims and those who followed in their footsteps. Besides outlining the principles and foundations of this creed he also highlights some of the foreign ideas and deviant concepts that have crept into the hearts and minds. The style in which this book has been written relates more to a textbook than to a book for casual reading. The author has carefully structured the book, divided it in to clearly headed sections and provided all the necessary definitions and explanations that will facilitate a clear understanding of this immensely important branch of knowledge.

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